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What Shall We Read to the Children?

What Shall We Read to the Children?

By

Clara Whitehill Hunt

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TO

MY FATHER AND MOTHER

"Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high
Can keep my own away from me."

WHEN MOTHER READS ALOUD

When mother reads aloud, the past
  Seems real as every day;
I hear the tramp of armies vast,
I see the spears and lances cast,
  I join the thrilling fray;
Brave knights and ladies fair and proud
I meet, when mother reads aloud.

When mother reads aloud, far lands
  Seem very near and true;
I cross the desert's gleaming sands,
Or hunt the jungle's prowling bands,
  Or sail the ocean blue;
Far heights, whose peaks the cold mists shroud,
I scale, when mother reads aloud.

When mother reads aloud, I long
  For noble deeds to do —
To help the right, redress the wrong;
It seems so easy to be strong,
  So simple to be true.
Oh, thick and fast the visions crowd
My eyes, when mother reads aloud!

AUTHOR UNKNOWN.

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What Shall We Read to the Children?

CHAPTER I

FATHERS AND MOTHERS AND CHILDREN'S BOOKS

THE book agent was a very persuasive talker. She was, moreover, an attractive young thing to look upon, the blues in her tasteful gown and hat emphasizing the color of her pretty eyes and setting off the gold of her soft hair. When one adds that she seemed really fond of children, and that four- and five-year-old Teddy and Frances were soon leaning confidingly against her knee, listening to the story of a picture in the wonderful subscription set offered on such reasonable terms, it is not surprising that this gifted agent car-

ried away an order for the ten volumes of Blank's "History of the World," to be delivered within a week at the home of the ambitious little mother of four growing children.

When Ted Senior came home from the office a teasing twinkle answered his wife's account of her purchase; and when the volumes arrived, a swift examination of the pulpy paper, cheap half-tones and stilted language put the finishing touches to Mrs. Ted's misgivings about the wonderful "Home Educator" which she had far-sightedly provided for her young.

The children, however, from baby Teddy to seven- and nine-year-old Dick and Tom, promptly showed their lack of sympathy with the grown-ups' disapproval of the new acquisition. Three minutes after the unpacking, four round heads were bent over four stout volumes, and a stillness like unto that of sermon

time settled upon the sitting-room of the house of — Jones, let us call it. Were there not pictures, scattered generously through the thick books, — every few pages a picture: a picture that told a story — a story of strange people doing thrillingly interesting things that Father and Mother would have to explain, evenings and rainy days and Sundays?

The explanations began that very evening.

"Father, what does it say under this picture?"

Father emerged from his newspaper long enough to read: "Marie Antoinette and her husband holding court under Louis XV."

"Who was Marie Antoinette, Father?"

After a pause: "She was a beautiful and unfortunate queen."

"*Why* was she unfortunate, Father? What happened to her? Was she real or

just a story queen? Did she have any little princes? Did she have a coach and six and outriders and gold dishes and — *tell* me, Father!"

The newspaper slid to the floor and was not picked up till Mother came to shoo the reluctant history class to bed.

This was the beginning of a series of impromptu talks on general history, extending over a number of years and exhibiting the somewhat unusual spectacle of pupils so athirst for information as to be obliged to prod their teacher in order to satisfy their cravings.

The other day some of the grown-up relatives of that family of children were speaking of the old "History of the World" and its effect upon the children's development in breadth of interest. "Positively, our Dick at seven years of age knew more about the French Revolution than I did at seventeen," said one of Dick's aunts.

"And the best of it was, he *wanted* to know, — he did not have his information jammed into an obstinate noddle by a suffering teacher."

Now the moral I wish to draw from the above essentially true story is not that one should indulge in subscription sets if attractive and intelligent agents offer them at one's door. On the contrary, I would never make such a purchase without expert advice. But the experience of the Jones family offers a number of suggestions worth noting by buyers of a young child's library, as for example: —

That children and grown people frequently differ as to what is interesting to children;

That a healthy child is a live interrogation-point;

That this curiosity is not limited to babyish things;

That no parent need have the slightest

fear of forcing his child into an attack of brain-fever by answering fully the spontaneous questions of his small son or daughter;

That the library in which a child "tumbles about" before he is seven will have a tremendous influence upon the interests and tastes of that child to the end of his life;

That it is worth while to choose such a library as will make those interests and tastes the best possible;

That it is woeful waste to leave to teacher and librarian — that is, to leave until the child, at seven or eight, learns to read — the influencing of the reading tastes of one's boys and girls.

One of the most surprising observations of my library experience is the lack of respect for their children's mental powers shown by devoted parents.

"What!" exclaims the long-suffering

friend of a fond parent, "the father who thinks no child before his ever cut a tooth so cleverly, who is sure when his boy first articulates 'Pa-pa,' that the youngster is destined to become a Demosthenes, — do you mean to say you think *that* parent is inclined to belittle his child's gifts?"

After years of acquaintance with all sorts I assert that the parents who do not, consciously or unconsciously, hold back their children's intellectual development are so uncommon as to be noticeable; and I am not thinking of the fathers and mothers who are themselves unable to read or write, but of those from our intelligent and materially prosperous classes. The anxious care with which parents keep their eager-minded children on literary bottle diet, until only the most intensely active-brained escape the stunting effect on their interests, — this habit of mothers who would cheerfully lay their heads on

the block for the good of their young, — I sometimes think must be due to the truly awful — and of course truly proper — emphasis laid upon the care necessary for the perfect physical development of the baby.

Young mothers to-day are so appallingly wise! They know to a day when it is time to add to the quantity or variety of the little one's food; they are fully alive to the importance of outdoor play in making healthy bodies; they have heard sad tales of the early graves of young prodigies, forced by parents less wise than ambitious. Perhaps, too, out of their respect for the opinion of the specialist in one line, — that of the child's physical care, — the mother acquires a feeling that it is best to leave to the expert in another the guidance of the child's reading.

So it happens that we librarians often find the children of intelligent parents

strangely narrow in their reading tastes, since we catch the children too late to have the necessary influence upon them. And so it happens that I am writing to urge fathers and mothers, while they are perfecting themselves in the knowledge of the care and feeding of children's bodies, to give more study than has been customary to the care and feeding of the young minds.

CHAPTER II

THE POETRY HABIT

WHEN I was a little girl I had the good fortune to live in a city where there were no bridge crushes and police-patrol gongs, barrack-built flats and brown-stone rows, to frighten away the birds and crowd out the flowers and play-spaces; but where fathers, even on moderate salaries, could own little houses with big piazzas and generous yards. We boys and girls raised jack-o'-lantern pumpkins in those yards, and cheerful morning-glories and downy chickens. We plucked juicy plums and cherries and grapes from our own trees and vines. We played in safe, shady streets without fear of trolleys or motors; for our city was so charmingly behind the times that the jingling horse-car did not readily give place

to the clanging electric. In spring we tapped the maple trees in front of our houses, smacking our lips over the few spoonfuls of sap that dripped as musically into our suspended pails as if this were a "truly" maple-sugar camp in the country. After school hours, in the rapidly gathering dusk of short autumn days, we raked gorgeous leaves into huge piles and danced wild Indian dances around bonfires that blazed like beacons up and down the length of streets unpaved with forbidden asphalt. We made snow-forts and snowmen and Eskimo huts, we wallowed in clean snowdrifts, we coasted down long, hilly streets on our big brothers' "bobs."

Yet how all these pleasures of the school year were as drab to scarlet contrasted with the radiance of vacations on grandmother's beautiful farm! How we hated to take off our clothes at night for fear troublesome buttons would make us miss

something in the mornings when we woke far too early to bother poor mother to help us dress. How, beneath all the childish, physical delights of wading and huckleberrying and riding a-top the loaded hay-wagon and playing "I spy" in the shadowy barn, there flowed the deep current of joy in the beauty of earth and sky! When, barefooted under the willows, we tugged at heavy rocks which we perspiringly erected into lighthouses and forts to guard our homes along the brook, — I should say the seashore, — we were only dimly conscious that the song of the brook and the carpet of dancing light and shade under our feet, the feel of the flower-scented breeze on our hot little faces, the murmur and hum of the insects in the waving meadow grass over the stone wall, the vivid blue of the sky which an old black crow "caw caw'd" for us to look up and notice, — that all these beauties of Mother

Earth were a deep part of the happiness of our free play in the outdoors, whose largeness was answering to a craving of the child-soul, that feels the cramp of the city more than does the adult.

To-day I watch the children at play as I walk to my office along streets of highly respectable apartment-houses. How cruelly narrow the range for the imagination of the young child! The very "respectability" of a neighborhood — which exacts a rent that often eats up all country vacation money — is against the child. How can a youngster possibly have a good time if he is not allowed to muss up the front steps and get his clothes dirty? Yet it is not the physical handicap of the city child that most stirs my pity, for his health record is steadily improving. It is the little one's missing experiences in beauty, it is the robbery of his imagination, effected by paved streets, that I deplore.

There is no possible help for these children except as they shall get their experiences vicariously through father and mother and books. For our comfort we know how marvelously books can be made to supply what father's salary cannot. Only we need to remember how and when to apply the various books. There is a best time for introducing poetry and myth and heroes of history; and a lifelong loss may be that child's whose parents know not when to feed a certain interest.

The baby's first taste of poetry should be given not later than a month after he alights, trailing his clouds of glory and with the music of his heavenly home attuning his ears to a delight in rhyme and rhythm long before mother's songs convey word meanings to his mind. There never was a normal baby born into this world who did not bring with him a love for poetry; and the fact that so few adults retain a trace

of this most pure delight points to the need of conscious effort on the parent's part to foster the child's natural gift.

So the first book I would put into the baby's library would be a collection of the loveliest lullabies and hymns and sweet old story songs. I know that doctors and nurses frown upon rocking the baby to sleep, but if I were a young mother I'd rock and sing to that baby after he waked up! I would sing Tennyson's "Sweet and low," and Holland's "Rockaby, lullaby, bees in the clover," and Field's "Wynken and Blynken and Nod"; the little German slumber song —

> Sleep, baby, sleep,
> The large stars are the sheep;

and the Gaelic lullaby —

> Hush, the waves are rolling in
> White with foam, white with foam.

I would sing "O little town of Bethlehem," and "It came upon the midnight

clear," and "While shepherds watched their flocks by night." I would sing the "Crusader's Hymn," and Luther's "A mighty fortress is our God," and Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light," and Pleyel's "Children of the Heavenly King," and Baring-Gould's "Now the day is over." I would sing "Annie Laurie," and "Home, sweet home," and "Flow gently, sweet Afton," and "The Swanee River."

Choosing songs so beautiful and so appealing to a child's heart, I should make sure that when the little one began to try to imitate mother, he would sing of winds that ruffle the waves of dew, of pleasant banks and green valleys and clear, winding rills, of the Heavenly Father's care, of the enduringness of home love. I should know that, though the words at first called up no clear mental pictures, they would spell love and beauty and happy feeling, and that life would, little by little, unfold

to the child the full meanings of these lovely songs.

Before the baby is a year old he will enjoy action rhymes like "This little pig went to market," "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man." By the time he is two, he will be trying to repeat the gay Mother Goose jingles with their irresponsible nonsense and their catching rhyme and rhythm. When he is three he will be enjoying Stevenson's "I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me," and other posies from "The Child's Garden of Verses."

Now the important thing is for the baby to acquire the poetry habit. A few years later, this child, if he has not listened to verse nearly every day of his life, may begin to be bored by the language of poetry, so dear to one who comprehends quickly, so tiresome to one who, for lack of right preparation, must dig out the

meanings as he works at a translation from a dead language.

At first we need to repeat nursery jingles and the simplest child verses, because these are the bottom steps of the "golden staircase" to real poetry. If, however, we try to get firmly lodged in mind the fact that children enjoy an infinite number of things which they do not understand; that they understand far more than they can express; that their understanding grows by leaps and bounds if we foolish adults do not interfere, — we shall stop trying to stint their active imaginations by keeping them so long on baby rhymes.

The child will most easily climb the staircase to real poetry by way of story-telling poems. Sentimental and martial, merry and sad, the story interest and the music of the old English and Scotch ballads fit them exactly to the liking of chil-

dren, little and big. Browning and Tennyson, Matthew Arnold and Scott and Longfellow give to the children "The Pied Piper," "The Lady of Shalott" "The Forsaken Merman," "Jock of Hazeldean," "The Bell of Atri." A number almost without end of stirring romances in verse will reward a search through our "adult" poetry library, after we have exhausted the lovely children's collections like "The Blue Poetry Book," "Golden Numbers," "The Golden Staircase," and others.

Each poem may be made to introduce many others, if we take advantage of the child's delight in the association of ideas he has acquired. For example, the little one has loved to hear mother sing "Annie Laurie" and "The Blue Bells of Scotland" and "The Campbells are comin'." He has mourned brave Sir Patrick Spens, has galloped with Lochinvar, and "wi' Wal-

lace bled" in defense of Scotland's freedom. Scotland to him has become a land of romance, dear to his heart. One day, after he has been lustily singing "The Campbells are comin', Oho! Oho!" mother tells him how the dying English, penned up in Lucknow, sprang to their feet laughing and crying with joy as they heard, faint and far away, the bagpipes playing "The Campbells are comin'." Now is the time to read Whittier's "The Pipes at Lucknow," as Bayard Taylor's "Song of the Camp" will touch the children after they have joined in singing "Annie Laurie." Taylor's poem, and the bit of explanation about the Crimean War which it involves, will introduce "The Charge of the Light Brigade," another stirring poem of the same war.

A whole cycle of Southern and Civil War songs and poems may follow the reading of the Uncle Remus stories, —

"Dixie," and "Maryland, my Maryland," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Sheridan's Ride," and "Oh, Captain, my Captain!" Somehow the child will enter into the heart of the North and the South, the soldier and the slave, and he will be a better American in this reunited country for loving the songs of both sections that gave their best for what they believed to be the right.

Make it an unvarying practice to link poetry with the children's every happy experience, every celebration, family or national or religious. Read the "Concord Hymn" and "Paul Revere's Ride" on the Fourth of July, "The Landing of the Pilgrims" at Thanksgiving, "The Flag goes by" and "The Commemoration Ode" on Memorial Day. Weeks before Christmas begin to read and sing every beautiful poem and song you can find. There are so many, we have no excuse for de-

scending to doggerel. On New Year's Eve read Tennyson's "Death of the Old Year"; on a gusty winter evening read "Old Winter is a sturdy one"; on the baby's birthday, "Where did you come from, Baby dear?" Before taking a journey hunt up poems of places the children will visit. After an exciting trip to the Zoo read Blake's "Tiger, tiger, burning bright," and Taylor's "Night with a Wolf."

When the children have enjoyed the Norse stories, read them Longfellow's "Skeleton in Armor." After hearing the stories of Tarpeia and Curtius and other Roman legends, they will be ready for Macaulay's "Lays."

Does any father or mother think I am going too fast? Prove it by experiment! I am suggesting a poetry course, not for the "exceptional child," but for real little bread-and-butter boys and girls of happy

birth and home environment. There are only three rules necessary to follow if you would delight your soul with watching your children's poetry taste grow with their growth. These are

Begin early.

Read poetry every day.

Read the right poem at the right time.

CHAPTER III

NATURE POETRY

It has been a comparatively simple task to keep alive the baby's poetry taste while we have confined ourselves to stories in verse. To kindle a love for nature poetry in the child who walks along paved streets lined with high brick walls, will be more difficult. The question of preparing the way and of choosing the time — the "psychological moment" — for reading will now be even more important than it has hitherto been.

The city lies gasping in the heat. The tiny square of grass in the yard is burned to a crisp. The dusty leaves on the few neighboring trees hang limp with thirst. The pavements almost scorch the feet. Suddenly clouds roll up, black and lower-

ing. Torrents of rain beat against the window. The choked sewers make rivers of the streets, rivers in which gleeful boys sail quickly improvised boats.

Little Wonder Eyes, too young to go to school, flattens his nose against the pane, watching, fascinated, for a long, long time, this glorious rain. Mother does not interrupt. She makes ready to vivify this experience by reading at bedtime Longfellow's "Rain in Summer": —

How beautiful is the rain!
After the dust and heat,
In the broad and fiery street,
In the narrow lane,
How beautiful is the rain!

How it clatters along the roofs,
Like the tramp of hoofs!
How it gushes and struggles out
From the throat of the overflowing spout!

Across the window-pane
It pours and pours;

And swift and wide,
With a muddy tide,
Like a river down the gutter roars
The rain, the welcome rain!

. . . . . .

From the neighboring school
Come the boys,
With more than their wonted noise
And commotion;
And down the wet streets
Sail their mimic fleets,
Till the treacherous pool
Ingulfs them in its whirling
And turbulent ocean.

In the country, on every side,
Where far and wide,
Like the leopard's tawny and spotted hide,
Stretches the plain,
In the dry grass and the drier grain,
How welcome is the rain!

In the furrowed land
The toilsome and patient oxen stand;
Lifting the yoke-encumbered head,
With their dilated nostrils spread,
They silently inhale
The clover-scented gale,

And the vapors that arise
From the well-watered and smoking soil.
For this rest in the furrow after toil
Their large and lustrous eyes
Seem to thank the Lord,
More than man's spoken word.
. . . . . .

Does any one question the child's enjoying this "grown-ups'" poem, heard in the freshness of a vivid experience? Of course, if we wait till next winter for our first reading, we need not wonder if the interest be languid.

Even city children have the sky. Don't always put the little one to bed by daylight. On some beautiful evening when the silvery radiance of the moon touches the prosaic city with magic, carry him out on the roof, and letting the marvelous splendor of the sky sink into his heart, repeat softly Addison's "Hymn":—

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale;

And nightly to the listening Earth
Repeats the story of her birth:
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball:
What though nor real voice nor sound
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?
In Reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
"The Hand that made us is divine."

Make the most of afternoons in the park, of Saturdays by lake or sea or river. A mother with an imagination can construct a whole forest out of a single tree. An inland mother can give the very tang of the sea by means of vivid stories and pictures — pictures of giant waves and storm-driven ships, of lighthouses, strange sea monsters, coral islands. Visits to the museum, a murmuring shell, the effects of

an inland storm, all these together will prepare a child to love Mary Howitt's "Sea-Gull": —

. . . . . .

For the Sea-Gull, he is a daring bird,
And he loves with the storm to sail;
To ride in the strength of the billowy sea,
And to breast the driving gale!
The little boat, she is tossed about,
Like a seaweed, to and fro;
The tall ship reels like a drunken man,
As the gusty tempests blow.

But the Sea-Gull laughs at the fear of man,
And sails in a wild delight
On the torn-up breast of the night-black sea,
Like a foam-cloud, calm and white.
The waves may rage and the winds may roar,
But he fears not wreck nor need;
For he rides the sea, in its stormy strength,
As a strong man rides his steed!

Oh, the white Sea-Gull, the bold Sea-Gull!
He makes on the shore his nest,
And he tries what the inland fields may be;
But he loveth the sea the best!
And away from land a thousand leagues,
He goes 'mid surging foam;
What matter to him is land or shore,
For the sea is his truest home!

If the child is actually to visit the shore next summer, save until he has gathered driftwood, until he has seen the lighthouse gleam through the fog and the little sandpiper flit along the beach, Celia Thaxter's "Sandpiper": —

Across the narrow beach we flit,
  One little sandpiper and I,
And fast I gather, bit by bit,
  The scattered driftwood bleached and dry.
The wild waves reach their hands for it,
  The wild wind raves, the tide runs high,
As up and down the beach we flit, —
  One little sandpiper and I.

Above our heads the sullen clouds
  Scud black and swift across the sky;
Like silent ghosts in misty shrouds
  Stand out the white lighthouses high.
Almost as far as eye can reach
  I see the close-reefed vessels fly,
As fast we flit along the beach, —
  One little sandpiper and I.

I watch him as he skims along,
  Uttering his sweet and mournful cry;

He starts not at my fitful song,
  Or flash of fluttering drapery.
He has no thought of any wrong;
  He scans me with a fearless eye:
Staunch friends are we, well tried and strong,
  The little sandpiper and I.

. . . . . .

Read Le Gallienne's "Child's Even-song"[1] at bedtime after a summer afternoon in park or field: —

The sun is weary, for he ran
  So far and fast to-day;
The birds are weary, for who sang
  So many songs as they?
The bees and butterflies at last
  Are tired out, for just think too
How many gardens through the day
  Their little wings have fluttered through.
And so, as all tired people do,
  They've gone to lay their sleepy heads
Deep, deep in warm and happy beds.
  The sun has shut his golden eye
And gone to sleep beneath the sky,
And birds and butterflies and bees
Have all crept into flowers and trees,

[1] From *English Poems*, by Richard Le Gallienne, published by John Lane Company, New York.

And all lie quiet, still as mice,
Till morning comes — like father's voice.

So Geoffry, Owen, Phyllis, you
Must sleep away till morning too.
Close little eyes, down little heads,
And sleep — sleep — sleep in happy beds.

Try to make it possible for the children to notice, by a country day in spring, Mother Nature's waking the alders and the willows, the grass and the violets, the frogs and the birds; and then read them Celia Thaxter's "Spring": —

The alder by the river
  Shakes out her powdery curls;
The willow buds in silver
  For little boys and girls.

The little birds fly over,
  And oh, how sweet they sing!
To tell the happy children
  That once again 't is spring.

The gay green grass comes creeping
  So soft beneath their feet;
The frogs begin to ripple
  A music clear and sweet.

And buttercups are coming,
  And scarlet columbine;
And in the sunny meadows
  The dandelions shine.

And just as many daisies
  As their soft hands can hold
The little ones may gather,
  All fair in white and gold.

Here blows the warm red clover,
  There peeps the violet blue;
O happy little children,
  God made them all for you!

Helen Hunt Jackson's "September" will be enjoyed after country walks in fall: —

The golden rod is yellow,
  The corn is turning brown,
The trees in apple orchards
  With fruit are bending down;

The gentian's bluest fringes
  Are curling in the sun;
In dusty pods the milkweed
  Its hidden silk has spun;

The sedges flaunt their harvest
In every meadow nook,
And asters by the brookside
Make asters in the brook;

From dewy lanes at morning
The grapes' sweet odors rise,
At noon the roads all flutter
With yellow butterflies —

By all these lovely tokens
September days are here,
With summer's best of weather
And autumn's best of cheer.[1]

Do you notice the poets we have drawn upon, — the real poets, not the obscure verse-grinders?

Have you ever thought what a child poem is that pearl of Shelley's, "The Cloud"? A child is most at home playing magic. He loves to pretend he is a lion, a mouse, a giant, a dragon. Shelley is playing the cloud is a magician, changing his

[1] Reprinted by permission of the publishers, Messrs. Little, Brown & Co.

form at pleasure. Do not read the poem until you are sure the child has noticed, with or without your gentle suggestions, the different manifestations of the clouds, in summer, in winter, by day, by night. He need not be a high-school pupil, competent to dissect the poem before he will love the imagery of

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about in the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 't is my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.

Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
  Lightning my pilot sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
  It struggles and howls at fits;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
  Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
  The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
  Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

That orbed maiden with white fire laden,
  Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
  By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
  Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
  The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
  Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent of my wind-built tent,
  Till the calm rivers, lakes and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
  Are each paved with the moon and these.

. . . . . .

The country mother will see how easy is her task compared with that of the city

mother. Not alone in youth but for a life time is one's appreciation of poetry largely affected by country experiences in childhood. I had quite grown up when I first chanced upon

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn.

Instantly I became an eager little girl on grandmother's doorstone, poised a moment to drink in the deliciousness of the day's beginning before I flew on to the barn to inspect the milking. Again and again have exquisite lines recalled to me thrilling moments of childhood summers in the country. Do you remember Alfred Noyes's "Pirates"? How the man, dreaming of a long dead comrade with whom he had played in years gone by, says —

Ah, that tree: I have sat in its boughs and looked seaward for hours;
I remember the creak of its branches; the scent of the flowers

That climbed round the mouth of the cave; it is odd I recall
Those little things best, that I scarcely took heed of at all.

Those last lines express the feeling common to all grown people who feel at all.

Oh, let us put the country into the memories of the men and women to be. No matinées nor museums, no beautiful clothes nor pampered stomachs, no electrical house appliances nor twentieth-century schools can ever make up to the man the loss from a childhood spent wholly in a great city. Not for the sake of literary taste in itself, but because the love for, or lack of response to, certain fine things in literature are indications of vital possessions or vital needs of the heart, do I urge that skimping be practiced in almost any direction other than that of denying children the country.

CHAPTER IV

PICTURE BOOKS

NOT long ago, in an afternoon's ramble among the paintings of the Metropolitan Museum, I became interested in watching an eager, black-eyed boy who, like myself, was spending his holiday in the gallery. Catching sight of Winslow Homer's "Gulf Stream" the lad's eyes fairly devoured the picture, so intense was his interest in it. Seizing his father's hand, he dragged the man over to the painting and urged, "Papa, what does it mean? What does it mean?"

The father, it was plain, had neither the information nor the imagination to guess what it "meant," so he answered evasively, "Oh — nothing. It 's only a picture."

Only the feeling that if I offered explanations I should belittle the father's intelligence in the child's eyes kept me from telling the bright lad what he wanted to know and what I ached to explain. The subject of the picture is horrible, to be sure, but a sturdy eight-year-old likes horrors, and if I had had a chance that boy would have gone away full of shipwrecks and derelicts and sea monsters, water spouts and tropic heat and the courage of men who go down to the sea in ships. Furthermore he would have persuaded his indulgent father — the man was the kindest of parents in intent, one could see — to go to the nearest children's library and get "The Sea and its Wonders," "The Book of the Ocean," and other books which would have interested the boy for weeks.

This lad was years older than the baby I have in mind in this chapter, but the

story illustrates some points I wish to make on the subject of picture books.

Your baby is a live bundle of curiosity. If you begin now to answer his questions as fully as he desires, you will be opening avenues of interest that will give him delight during his whole life. Besides, you will save time for him. A few years hence he will, without the slightest sign of brain fag, outstrip those of his age in school. Further, if you do not answer his questions, if through ignorance or impatience you snub his eager interests at the time they are first manifested, you may try in vain years later to bring back to the big boy that appetite for learning which is insatiable in the little one.

Again: Your baby is beginning to imitate everything he sees. Of course you wish to protect him as long as possible from seeing bad, and you will place before him a great many good and interesting

things to imitate, knowing that thus you will be helping the child to become good and happy and intelligent.

Let us see how the above knowledge is applied by the majority of adults when they select picture books for children.

Is it good for children to torture animals, to ridicule the maimed, the aged, the poor, to play sly tricks on silly parents, to mock at politeness, to tease servants, to destroy property, to make fun of those of different race or creed than one's own? Is it good for children to get their first acquaintance with beautiful old tales of loyalty and courage and perseverance in pictures of mocking caricature? Is it good to paint upon the child's retentive mind hideous daubs of color and false distortion of line — in short, to show him the worst in art and ethics at an age when discrimination is at zero and interest in every detail is at 100?

Of course this is bad, parents answer promptly. Yet in how many good homes one finds books patterned after the comic-supplement notion that, so long as a child is amused by a picture, it is of no consequence that he laughs at the representation of coarse and vulgar practical jokes, that he is seeing life distorted, is becoming familiar with bad art, and is imbibing the idea that to be virtuous is to be ridiculous.

There are parents thoughtful enough to keep out the bad who do not go far enough in providing the really worth while. The commonest fault of children's books in good homes is insipidity. We try so hard to stunt the children's mental growth! We have our fixed ideas as to the interests proper to childhood and we firmly lock away subjects presumably belonging to adults only.

There is a wonderful book by a French

artist picturing in splendid line and color the life and times of Joan of Arc. A certain five-year-old of my acquaintance for weeks made it his regular occupation, in the last hour before dinner of dark winter afternoons, to get out this book, spread it open on the sitting-room table, and, climbing upon a high chair to kneel, elbows on table, to pore over the pictures. The France of the fifteenth century in palace and cottage, in camp and cathedral, the dress of the people, the heraldic trappings, the stately ceremonials, the walled cities and methods of warfare — not a detail in this carefully studied and wonderfully executed representation of the times was lost on the small boy, who had no idea that he was gaining a background for such an appreciation of mediæval history as few big boys acquire.

In the art reference room of our public library I recently had occasion to ex-

amine the volumes on the Middle Ages of an expensive French work by Parmentier called "Album historique." As I looked up my subject, I thought, "What a picture book, this, for a child's library!" Here one saw, from prints of carvings on Chartres Cathedral, exactly how the carpenter, the baker, the butcher, the blacksmith of the twelfth century worked at their daily tasks. One could enter the house of a tenth-century family by way of an illustration from a precious manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale. The children's toys and games, the dresses and jewels and combs and lamps, all the domestic and public life of the times were profusely illustrated from original sources.

Now, of course, such a "picture book" for a child would need the running comment of an imaginative and pretty well-informed parent, but there are scores of parents able to supply the information to

one who would conceive the subject as within the child's range.

I don't seem to be getting to that baby, but I am really on the way. I am eager to emphasize the idea that we need not dole out to little children tiny sugar pellets of information on rigidly limited subjects, but that if we choose pictures of vivid story-telling quality we can use them as points of departure for all sorts of broad and worth-while interests.

We know that babies are very early interested in Mother Goose jingles and in animals. As the months pass they watch earnestly, then imitate the people about them — children at play, grown people at work driving horses, unloading coal, sweeping streets, making bread.

We have found that the youngest children like pictures large in figure, strong and simple in coloring, and well-defined in outline.

Every one at all acquainted with children knows that story-telling pictures, having much action and a good deal of clear detail, are the sort that appeal to little folks.

Here, then, are clues to the selection of the first picture books for the child. We shall not, after the first years, confine our choice to books strictly in the "picture books for children" class, but will follow the lead of the small boy's and girl's questions as fast as our slow brains can keep up with their nimble wits.

I would, then, during the baby's first three or four years, buy Randolph Caldecott's spirited pictures illustrating the old nursery rhymes, and Kate Greenaway's quaint little "Mother Goose"; Beatrix Potter's tiny "Peter Rabbit," "Benjamin Bunny," and others of the series which small children literally love to pieces; Leslie Brooke's droll animals in "Johnny

Crow's Garden," whose fun tickles grown-ups as much as it does the children; also Brooke's "Three Bears" and "Three Little Pigs," the enormous popularity of these latter among our public library children, by the way, suggesting that other makers of children's picture books would do well to study the style of Brooke's illustrations. I would include Félicité Le Fevre's "The Cock, the Mouse and the Little Red Hen"; and Boyd Smith's "Chicken World." In the animal picture books above, the artists, while giving human touches and sometimes human clothes and attitudes to the creatures, have kept their animals essentially true in delineation to real bears and pigs and rabbits. Kate Greenaway's "Under the Window," Parkinson's "Dutchie Doings" (an ugly name for a delightful book about Holland), Lucas and Bedford's "Four and Twenty Toilers" (one of the most

perfect of all on this list), Boyd Smith's "Farm Book" and "Seashore Book," with a few of the best foreign books whose stories are so plainly told by their pictures that the lack of English text will not matter — these are some of the fine picture books which we should like to have every little child own.

By means of the above we shall answer questions and raise more questions about the country and the sea, about ships and trains and the work of all sorts of useful "toilers." We shall see the quaint villages in which little English and French and German children live, the canals and dykes and windmills and wooden shoes of the country of the "Dutchie Doings"; we shall establish the best feeling toward all sorts of animal friends; we shall have gay laughs over the mishaps of Benjamin Bunny and Johnny Crow's guests and little Dutch Jan; and all this variety will

have been given in pictures so good, albeit so simple, that the seeds for that subtle growth, good taste in art, will have been sown.

CHAPTER V

FAIRY TALES

ROBERT, aged two and a half, was playing take a journey in a boat. The parlor rug was the boat and the surrounding floor the water. In a moment of forgetfulness Robert stepped off the rug, — into the water, I should say. So vivid was the little boy's feeling of being wet to the skin that he was inconsolable until mother brought a bath towel to dry the unlucky feet.

Charles is another small boy of my acquaintance. One day he was a coal man, busily shoveling blocks into a tiny cart and dumping them *kerplunk* into the bin in the corner of grandma's room. Accidentally Charles leaned against grandma's bed. Hastily drawing away his hand

he exclaimed, "Oh, grandma, see that great black spot on the counterpane!" Grandma, absorbed in her work, absent-mindedly replied, "I don't see any spot, Charles." "Why, grandma!" in accents of deep reproach, "I'm a coal man and my hands are all black!"

Three-year-old Harriet is one of my dearest friends. She and her mother come to "spend the day" at my house sometimes. On one of these happy occasions Harriet, after playing in another room for a while, came hurriedly to her mother, anxiety written over her small face, and exclaimed, "Oh, mamma, I'm afraid my baby has pneumonia! Won't you please come and tell me what to do for her?"

Mamma promptly laid aside her sewing and went to the patient's bedside. She gravely felt Dolly's pulse, took her temperature, listened to her breathing, and finally said to the worried parent,

"No, Mrs. Brown, it is not pneumonia, but your baby has a very bad cold. She has quite a fever, so don't put many coverings over her. We will give her very little medicine, but you must have plenty of fresh air in the room night and day. Keep the child out of the draft, but don't shut the window. And it would be a good thing to bring in a gas plate and keep some lime-water boiling on it constantly.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Brown. Don't worry about the baby. I'll look in again to-morrow."

The little mother listened with an intensity of concentration worthy a nurse on a critical case, and then proceeded to carry out orders with a fidelity to detail which doctors would be fervently thankful to see imitated by parents of real patients.

Amused and interested I asked Harriet's

mother, "Do you always 'make-believe' as seriously and sensibly as this?"

"Yes," was the reply; "it is just as easy to tell the child true things as to make up a lot of nonsense. Because her play is very real to her, she is vividly interested, and will remember every word I say. The knowledge she gets may be very useful to her sometime."

When I have something important to tell a person, I address him in a language he will understand. If he and I have no common speech, I use signs or pictures or some other device to convey my meaning.

Harriet and Charles and Robert and other little people of their age are living in the wonder years, when the language surest of appeal to their hearts, surest of making a vivid impression, is the language of fancy, of "make-believe." The time will come when these children will begin

to ask, "Is that story true? Tell me a true story now!" The time may even come when they will be interested in the scientific study of those natural phenomena with which the fairy tale takes such liberties.

At first it is the Wonderland animal that interests the child, tales of Benjamin Bunny, Brer Fox, the Wee Small Bear, the Little Red Hen, Johnny Crow. Later, true stories of brave dogs and cunning foxes and fierce lions become more interesting than the fanciful tales which the child gradually finds do not agree with fact. Last of all comes the study of zoölogy as a science.

Every now and then the Gradgrinds come to the fore and argue with heat against telling a child lies, — that is, fairy tales. These literal-minded people have no conception of the importance of allowing a child to develop in nature's

way, nor of the difference between lying — the intent to deceive — and imagining — the "let's pretend" faculty, more valuable to the adult, even, than to the child.

What is the most natural way for the child to explain certain of nature's manifestations?

"Come, little Leaves," said the Wind one day,
"Come over the meadow with me and play;
Put on your dresses of red and gold
For Summer has gone and the days grow cold."

Soon as the Leaves heard the Wind's loud call
Down they came fluttering one and all;
Over the brown fields they danced and flew,
Singing the soft little songs they knew.

Of course the child thinks of the leaves as little live creatures putting on gayly colored garments, frolicking with their big unseen playmate, the Wind, and finally going to sleep under a soft white blanket which Winter spreads over them. Of course he thinks of Jack Frost as paint-

ing the windows, nipping noses and fingers, icing over the streams; of the stars as winking at little boys down below; of the crescent moon as a golden boat; of the breezes as whispering to him; of the shadows as playing with him; of all nature, in short, as being alive in a vividly personal way.

Now, this is exactly the way the child's remote ancestors felt, ages and ages back. The myths record these fancies of primitive peoples; the hero tales and folk tales and legends grew out of the myths; the fairy tale is a modern invention after the fashion of the folk tale; and all the stories of this sort are the special literary form of the child, answering to a deep and right craving of his nature.

Apart from the joy-giving value of the fairy tale there is a use in it which even the Gradgrinds ought to respect. When the Great Teacher told the parables of the

sower, the house built upon a rock, the wise and foolish virgins, we understand that he was inventing stories to make clear to his hearers certain spiritual truths. Here we have the story not true to *fact*, but true to *truth*.

The fairy tale has been called a poetic presentation of a spiritual truth. When we tell our little ones of a brave and gentle prince who, aided by fairies and gnomes and friendly talking beasts, rides through space on North Wind's shoulder, slays a terrible dragon, and releases the beautiful princess from the wicked magician's castle, what is the staying part of the story we have told in this fanciful language? Is it not that courage and gentleness and truth make one strong to fight and to overcome evil? Surely the sooner we get such an idea rooted in the child's heart the nobler child he will be; and if the way to his heart is through his

fancy, why stupidly try a path that forbids rather than invites the child to walk in it?

The little boy who uses his father's cane for a horse, who is now a hunter in a deep forest, a minute later a roaring lion, and next is playing with the fishes at the bottom of the ocean, this boy we do not call a liar. No more need we fear the effect of fairy tales upon his character if we choose those in which the child's sympathies are enlisted for the brave and pure and faithful and friendly, and his contempt is aroused against the coward, the sneak, the lazy, the ugly in character.

Of course we must never spoil these artistic stories by rubbing in their lesson. Let the children have the pure joy of their playful fancy without our tagging on at the end, "Now the moral of this story is —" The fable, however, can sometimes be tellingly used for pointing a moral to a naughty small person.

One day when I was a tiny girl, with toys from my emptied play cupboard strewn about me, my baby sister, creeping near, began playing with a toy I had not thought of wanting that morning. I snatched the toy away from little sister just as my dear mother passed through the room. Not in a frowning way, but with a gentle, humorous twinkle, mother let fall the remark, "Dog in the manger!" I dropped that toy as if it had scorched, for did I not see myself as the ugly, snarling dog who could not eat hay himself, yet would not allow the patient, hungry cow to come near her well-earned supper?

I have spoken of the joy value and the ethical value of the fairy tale. I wish I could make all the world feel its value to the imagination — the importance *of* an imagination in this day of worship of the material. It takes imagination to believe in God, in the soul, in immortality. Peo-

ple without imagination or with starved imaginations lack the fineness and the infinite variety that make life interesting to them, and themselves interesting to others. Imagination is needed not only by the poet, the artist, the musician, but is essential to the leader in practical lines — in business management, bridge-building, railroading. How could one build a bridge without first having a picture of the structure in his mind — imagining it, in short?

There is another argument for the wonder stories in the joy they will give the man, years hence, when he looks at pictures, listens to music, reads poems which demand for their complete appreciation an understanding of the old myths to which they allude. No grubbing through classical dictionaries will make up to the man for the joy he will miss if these allusions do not call up to him beautiful old stories beloved in his childhood.

There is still more to be said for the wonder stories. The picturesque vocabulary of little children fed on the best; the engaging brightness of mind that makes their talk a delight to an adult not too dull to appreciate its poetry; the happy effect upon their play shown when the children dramatize the fanciful tales — these are other worthwhile results of familiarizing children with the literature of Wonderland.

In closing, a word or two of caution. We must remember that there are many unwholesome fairy tales, just as there are bad pictures; that we must shield a high-strung child from the too fearful; that we must be watchful lest the excessively imaginative child be allowed a too-exclusive diet of wonder stories, just as we would wish to steep in fanciful literature the occasional youngster of the very matter-of-fact type.

CHAPTER VI

BIBLE STORIES

Two small boys had been spending the week-end at grandma's — their first overnight visit away from mother. As they were being put to bed on Sunday night, one of the aunties remarked, "I've a nice story to read to you after you are tucked in."

The youngsters looked a bit suspiciously at the Bible in auntie's hand. That book was associated with long sitting still in church, with texts to be committed, with moral and religious talks given by not always skillful Sunday-School teachers. However, auntie's ideas of a good story always had coincided exactly with their own, so they were ready to give the Bible a hearing at least.

Auntie opened to the Book of Esther. Pencil marks here and there indicated for omission some unimportant parts; this in order that, at one not too long reading, the whole of the story might be given.

Here is the way auntie began to read: —

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus . . . when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces being before him . . .

When he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.

And when these days were expired, the king made a great feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace; Where were white, green and blue hangings fastened with cords of fine linen to purple and

silver rings and pillars of marble; the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red and blue and white and black marble.

And they gave them drink in vessels of gold — the vessels being diverse one from another — and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.

At the beginning of the reading there had been a good deal of rustling in the bed. It was difficult to fall in at once with the notion that the Bible could be interesting enough for close attention! Soon, however, the moving about ceased and to the end of the story such stillness reigned as made auntie glance up once in a while to see if the boys had dropped off to Dreamland. Not a bit of it! Who could think of sleep while such pictures of Oriental magnificence were being woven before one's eyes by those splendidly colorful words? A long sigh of complete satisfaction, the same sign of reluctant coming back to earth as greeted auntie's

most successful fairy tales, was evidence of the boys' entire approval of the reading.

Now, let us put beside the above the Old Testament's own language unaltered except by omission, the following version, which, be it noted, is exceptionally good among the children's retold Bibles which flood the market: —

There was a gentle Jewish girl named Esther who had been left an orphan very young and was brought up by her kind relation Mordecai, who was one of the Jews who had not gone back to Jerusalem, but still lived in Persia.

One day there came a messenger from the king to carry away poor Esther from home. The king wanted all the maidens in his land to be brought together, that he might choose the most beautiful of them all for his queen, and the others would be kept for slaves. All the other maidens dressed themselves up, and painted themselves to try to look beautiful; but Esther did not ask for any ornaments, she only put on what she was ordered to wear. Yet she looked so much the most lovely of

them all, in her modest quietness, that the king chose her and married her, and set the crown on her head, and made her his queen. But she had a sad life though she was queen. She was always shut up and could not see her kind friend Mordecai, and she could not even go to her husband without his leave, or she would have been put to death.

How tame, how colorless, how lacking in vividness, in poetry, in magnificence is this gentle simplification! And why was it attempted? Because a child is not able to define every word in the original? Who cares if he is n't? Not he, certainly. His enjoyment does not depend upon definitions. The words he does understand, and the sound of those he does not, paint for him pictures the more alluring for a vagueness that leaves all sorts of splendors to the imagination.

"An hundred and fourscore days" — what a very, very long feast, and how rich and mighty must have been the king who

could feed and amuse his guests so long and so magnificently! Is our small boy at all bothered that he does not know exactly how many "fourscore" days were?

It is not the purpose of this chapter to discuss the Bible as a theological work or religious guide. For such use I would refer parents to Mrs. Louise Seymour Houghton's "Telling Bible Stories to Children" and Dean Hodges's books for parents and children. Of course, some will think one or both of these writers too modern, while others will complain of their being too traditional. They will at least be suggestive to adults puzzled about what to teach the children, since modern scholarship has changed our understanding of some parts of the Bible.

Whatever our viewpoint on Biblical doctrine, we are waking up to the idea that, since the Bible is woven into the literature and history of our race, familiarity

with it is exceedingly important to our young people, if we would have them appreciate to the full the best things in the life of the mind and spirit. If we can, by the interest we kindle in little children, prepare them to grow up loving those best things, by all means we will do this.

We all agree that the Bible contains a wonderful collection of stories suited to the taste of young and old. We know that no finer literature exists, that poetry and pathos, grandeur and tender beauty, all the thoughts of the human heart and the glory of earth and heaven are expressed in language matchlessly vivid and simple. Will any one give a good reason why this language should be turned into commonplace English for children who particularly delight in rhythmical, poetic sound? Only the tiny children need the Bible simplified, except by omission.

Do you know why librarians often find the children of clever parents reading inane and foolish stories, counting as too great a mental effort the books their fathers and mothers adored in their early youth? It is largely because of this mania for simplification that has fallen upon the land in our time. It is very illogical for us to be disappointed in a twelve-year-old who turns from books rich in allusion, style, and breadth, if, for the greater part of those twelve years, we have carefully guarded him from mental stretching, which an unspoiled, active-minded child really enjoys. In our mistaken kindness we make healthy minds become soft for lack of exercise.

No great book has yet been written in "first-reader" English — nor yet in "second-reader" or "third-reader." Let the little ones grow up in hearing of a rich and varied speech and the big ones will

not be discouraged with the first pages of a nobly written book.

For every reason make the Bible lovingly familiar to the children. Choose those of the stories best suited to their liking. Make the reading a special treat, never a compulsory duty. Do not let the children go to Sunday-School until you have satisfied yourself that their love for the Book will be enhanced, not killed by unskillful teaching.

And carry to the consideration, not only of this but of all other splendidly written stories, the conviction that children enjoy much and get much from many things which they do not wholly understand at the first hearing; and that the relation between the reading taste of six and twelve years may be as definite as is the relation between the brains, skill, and industry of the farmer and the kind of crops he raises. There is some uncertainty about results

in both fields, I admit, but in crops and children it is far more often bad management than bad luck that is responsible for poor products.

CHAPTER VII

STORIES THAT MIGHT BE TRUE: SOME "DON'TS"

THUS far I have tried to make my suggestions follow the principle that the best way to keep out the bad is to fill up mind space with good. I have used the positive rather than the negative, the "Do" instead of the "Don't" method in offering advice.

This, however, must be a chapter of "Don'ts." We are to take up the "Story that might be true," child fiction corresponding to the realistic novel of the adult.

In their stories of real boys and girls who have no dealings with fairies, but who do (supposedly) possible and probable things, our small people live through,

in imagination, many new experiences. They adopt the ideas of their story boy or girl, they become interested in the things that interest the story children.

Now, what sort of things are many writers to-day making interesting to children?

Foremost among the stories which most people pronounce "safe" and many call "charming" is the type dubbed by an "Outlook" writer "the little child shall lead them" story.

I have in mind one in which a motherless eight-year-old, brought up in a boarding-house, manages her father's affairs — and the landlady's and the boarders' — with an executive ability that would put many a grown woman to blush. She divides her father's weekly salary into neat piles of board money, clothes money, money to go into the bank, etc. She coaxes the irate cook into good humor,

placates the grouchy boarder and soothes the worried landlady into grateful relief. When her father is unmanned by an accusation of forgery, this capable child bids him put on his hat and accompany her to the lawyer where she ably states the case for her parent. She is the means by which this same unappreciated poet father finds the road to fame, and the story ends with a picture of our heroine of eight embarking for Europe amid such an avalanche of flowers that other passengers, seeing the floral tributes coming aboard, wonder if a famous opera singer is traveling on the steamer.

Another story is of an eight-year-old boy whose career is one round of sensational benevolence. Out of a list of shining deeds too long to quote in full I instance the hero's effecting a reconciliation between a father and son long estranged, his patching up a lover's quarrel,

bringing a neglected actor to the attention of an important manager, averting a factory strike, and saving from a burning building a roomful of children.

There are stories of children who bring together father and mother who have separated; who win to devoted motherhood women too absorbed in society to remember their children's existence. There is a tale of a four-year-old who is the unconscious means of bringing to his better senses a man who, having been jilted by the child's mother years before, had buried himself from the world with a pistol handy for the sucide he kept in mind as a possible means of escape from his thoughts.

You are horrified that parents buy such books. You would be more astonished if I were to tell you not only who buy but who write stories like these. I refuse to advertise the stuff by naming titles, but

most of the above are the work of authors in excellent standing.

Let the children have real fairy tales, by all means. But by all means insist that their stories of real life be true to life, to the wholesome, natural, simple life you are trying to insure to your children.

There is much evil in this good world of ours. Our children need to know what is bad in order to avoid it. They must be helped to grow strong to resist temptation. The stories in which they live vicariously the life of the heroes or heroines may be of immense help in illustrating the brave way to face and conquer difficulties.

There are many sorts of evil, however, from the knowledge of which little children should be shielded if possible. The misfortunes or wickednesses of adult life, unhappy marriages, false lovers, brutal fathers, silly mothers, jealousy, forgery, burglaries — you will probably think it

absurd for me to beg you to protect children from stories in which these things figure. But since writers of children's stories will drag in such themes, and since friends and relatives more generous than wise will continue to choose your children's Christmas books by covers rather than contents, this warning is not unnecessary.

Books about child characters who are naughty in childlike ways, — these are in a different class; but even here be careful. To tell a story because there are so many interesting and happy things in the world to bring to children, this should be the reason for writing a child's book. Neither the story that paints a naughty child as a solemn warning for the young, nor the one (so amusing to the adult) that describes the pranks of the picturesque bad boy of the town is desirable reading for little children.

There are many other "Don'ts" for us to remember. The Sunday-School story of a generation ago is dying out. Do not revive it under the impression that the priggish heroine will be a wholesome example for your child. Remember, too, that many books do not practice what they preach. There are authors who write against snobbishness and money worship who yet make very evident their sense of the superiority of those elect beings who, from silken heights, graciously bestow alms upon the child in the gutter.

Avoid stories in which children begin early to lead the life of society women; in which the author, pretending to write for children, gives the impression that she is winking at an adult over the child's "cute" blunders of speech and understanding.

Do not choose stories of swift and startling action — such will cultivate the taste

for the sensational, the newspaper headline sort of writing.

And finally, do not be too literal in applying the above "Don'ts." We sometimes find in a story, beautiful on the whole, a minor episode which we wish the author had left out. We must learn to judge the effect of the book as a whole, to have a sense of proportion which will tell us whether the final impression of the story upon the child will be good and true or whether its less desirable features will make the stronger impression.

The largest number of all the not worth-while books for children are those in which one cannot point out features so plainly objectionable that any thoughtful parent would recognize their harmfulness. The soft, "safe," inane, sugar-and-water story that leads nowhere, that has no positive qualities, bad or good, that consumes good time, that opens no windows

in the child's mind, — this story also let us avoid. Our children are too good for such mental pap. They deserve the best, the stories of "some particular good" rather than those of "no particular harm" — this latter being the stock defense put up against the librarian who objects to spending public money on books that waste time and atrophy the mind. When she contemplates buying a chair or a carpet or a tablecloth does any woman accept indifferently a "not-bad" article if the very best of its kind is within reach of her purse? How is it that we seem so indifferent to the furnishing of our children's minds and hearts when we spend so much care upon the furnishing of their physical surroundings? When the child reads to himself we cannot prevent his devouring some commonplace books, but while his reading is in our hands let us see that he knows the best and only the best.

CHAPTER VIII

STORIES THAT MIGHT BE TRUE: HOW TO CHOOSE THEM

It will be a relief to return to the emphasis of the good after having dwelt so long upon depressing "Don'ts."

To bring out the positive qualities which we should like to find in every story for little children I can think of no better plan than, first, to quote bodily a chapter from a book which possesses practically everything desirable, and next, to call attention to the book's good features point by point.

The story I have in mind is called "The Dutch Twins." After a little introduction of Kit and Kat, the Twins, the author begins: —

CHAPTER ONE

THE DAY THEY WENT FISHING [1]

ONE summer morning, very early, Vrouw Vedder opened the door of her little Dutch kitchen and stepped out.

She looked across the road which ran by the house, across the canal on the other side, across the level green fields that lay beyond, clear to the blue rim of the world, where the sky touches the earth. The sky was very blue; and the great, round, shining face of the sun was just peering over the tops of the trees, as she looked out.

Vrouw Vedder listened. The roosters in the barnyard were crowing, the ducks in the canal were quacking, and all the little birds in the fields were singing for joy. Vrouw Vedder hummed a slow little tune of her own, as she went back into her kitchen.

Kit and Kat were still asleep in their little cupboard bed. She gave them each a kiss. The Twins opened their eyes and sat up.

"O Kit and Kat," said Vrouw Vedder, "the sun is up, the birds are all awake and

[1] Copyright, 1911, by Lucy Fitch Perkins.

singing, and grandfather is going fishing to-day. If you will hurry, you may go with him! He is coming at six o'clock; so pop out of bed and get dressed. I will put some lunch for you in the yellow basket, and you may dig worms for bait in the garden. Only be sure not to step on the young cabbages that father planted."

Kit and Kat bounced out of bed in a minute. Their mother helped them put on their clothes and new wooden shoes. Then she gave them each a bowl of bread and milk for their breakfast. They ate it sitting on the kitchen doorstep.

This is a picture of Kit and Kat digging worms. You see they did just as their mother said, and did not step on the young cabbages. They sat on them, instead. But that was an accident.

Kit dug the worms, and Kat put them into a basket, with some earth in it to make them feel at home.

When grandfather came, he brought a large fishing-rod for himself and two little ones for the Twins. There was a little hook on the end of each line.

Vrouw Vedder kissed Kit and Kat good-bye.

"Mind grandfather, and don't fall into the water," she said.

Grandfather and the Twins started off together down the long road beside the canal.

The house where the Twins lived was right beside the canal. Their father was a gardener, and his beautiful rows of cabbages and beets and onions stretched in long lines across the level fields by the roadside.

Grandfather lived in a large town, a little way beyond the farm where the Twins lived. He did not often have a holiday, because he carried milk to the doors of the people in the town, every morning early. Sometime I will tell you how he did it; but I must not tell you now, because if I do, I can't tell you about their going fishing.

This morning, grandfather carried his rod and the lunch-basket. Kit and Kat carried the basket of worms between them, and their rods over their shoulders, and they were all three very happy.

They walked along ever so far, beside the canal; then turned to the left and walked along a path that ran from the canal across the green fields to what looked like a hill.

But it was n't a hill at all, really, because

there are n't any hills in Holland. It was a long, long wall of earth, very high — oh, as high as a house, or even higher! And it had sloping sides.

There is such a wall of earth all around the country of Holland, where the Twins live. There has to be a wall, because the sea is higher than the land. If there were no walls to shut out the sea, the whole country would be covered with water; and if that were so, then there would n't be any Holland, or any Holland Twins, or any story. So you see it was very lucky for the Twins that the wall was there. They called it a dyke.

Grandfather and Kit and Kat climbed the dyke. When they reached the top, they sat down a few minutes to rest and look at the great blue sea. Grandfather sat in the middle, with Kit on one side, and Kat on the other; and the basket of worms and the basket of lunch were there, too.

They saw a great ship sail slowly by, making a cloud of smoke.

"Where do the ships go, grandfather?" asked Kit.

"To America, and England, and China, and all over the world," said grandfather.

"Why?" asked Kat. Kat almost always said "Why?" and when she did n't, Kit did.

"To take flax and linen from the mills of Holland to make dresses for little girls in other countries," said grandfather.

"Is that all?" asked Kit.

"They take cheese and herring, bulbs and butter, and lots of other things besides, and bring back to us wheat and meat and all sorts of good things from the lands across the sea."

"I think I'll be a sea captain when I'm big," said Kit.

"So will I," said Kat.

"Girls can't," said Kit.

But grandfather shook his head and said:

"You can't tell what a girl may be by the time she's four feet and a half high and is called Katrina. There's no telling what girls will do anyway. But, children, if we stay here we shall not catch any fish."

So they went down the other side of the dyke and out onto a little pier that ran from the sandy beach into the water.

Grandfather showed them how to bait their hooks. Kit baited Kat's for her, because Kat said it made her all wriggly inside

to do it. She did not like it. Neither did the worm!

They all sat down on the end of the pier. Grandfather sat on the very end and let his wooden shoes hang down over the water; but he made Kit and Kat sit with their feet stuck straight out in front of them, so they just reached to the edge, — "So you can't fall in," said grandfather.

They dropped their hooks into the water, and sat very still, waiting for a bite. The sun climbed higher and higher in the sky, and it grew hotter and hotter on the pier. The flies tickled Kat's nose and made her sneeze.

"Keep still, can't you?" said Kit crossly. "You'll scare the fish. Girls don't know how to fish, anyway."

Pretty soon Kat felt a queer little jerk on her line. She was perfectly sure she did.

Kat squealed and jerked her rod. She jerked it so hard that one foot flew right up in the air, and one of her new wooden shoes went — splash — right into the water!

But that was n't the worst of it! Before you could say Jack Robinson, Kat's hook flew around and caught in Kit's clothes and pricked him.

Kit jumped and said "Ow!" And then — no one could ever tell how it happened — there was Kit in the water, too, splashing like a young whale, with Kat's hook still holding fast to his clothes in the back!

Grandfather jumped then, too, you may be sure. He caught hold of Kat's rod and pulled hard and called out, "Steady there, steady!"

And in one minute there was Kit in the shallow water beside the pier, puffing and blowing like a grampus!

Grandfather reached down and pulled him up.

When Kit was safely on the pier, Kat threw her arms around his neck, though the water was running down in streams from his hair and eyes and ears.

"O Kit," she said, "I truly thought it was a fish on my line when I jumped!"

"Just like a g-g-girl," said Kit. "They don't know how to f-f-fish." You see his teeth were chattering, because the water was cold.

"Well, anyway," said Kat, "I caught more than you did. I caught you!"

Then Kat thought of something else. She shook her finger at Kit.

"O Kit," she said, "mother told you *not* to fall into the water!"

"'T-t-t was all your fault," roared Kit. "Y-y-you began it! Anyway, where is your new wooden shoe?"

"Where are both of yours?" screamed Kat.

Sure enough, where were they? No one had thought about shoes, because they were thinking so hard about Kit.

They ran to the end of the pier and looked. There was Kat's shoe sailing away toward America like a little boat! Kit's were still bobing about in the water near the pier.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" shrieked Kat; but the tide was going out and carrying her shoe farther away every minute. They could not get it; but grandfather reached down with his rod and fished out both of Kit's shoes. Then Kat took off her other one and her stockings, and they all three went back to the beach.

Grandfather and Kat covered Kit up with sand to keep him warm while his clothes were drying. Then grandfather stuck the Twins' fish-poles up in the sand and tied the lines together for a clothes-line, and hung Kit's clothes up on it, and Kat put their three wooden shoes in a row beside Kit.

Then they ate their luncheon of bread and butter, cheese, and milk, with some radishes from father's garden. It tasted very good, even if it was sandy. After lunch grandfather said, —

"It will never do to go home without any fish at all."

So by and by he went back to the pier and caught one while the Twins played in the sand. He put it in the lunch-basket to carry home.

Kat brought shells and pebbles to Kit, because he had to stay covered up in the sand, and Kit built a play dyke all around himself with them, and Kat dug a canal outside the dyke. Then she made sand-pies in clam-shells and set them in a row in the sun to bake.

They played until the shadow of the dyke grew very long across the sandy beach, and then grandfather said it was time to go home.

He helped Kit dress, but Kit's clothes were still a little wet in the thick parts. And Kat had to go barefooted and carry her one wooden shoe.

They climbed the dyke and crossed the fields, and walked along the road by the canal. The road shone, like a strip of yellow ribbon

across the green field. They walked quite slowly, for they were tired and sleepy.

By and by Kit said, "I see our house"; and Kat said, "I see mother at the gate."

Grandfather gave the fish he caught to Kit and Kat, and Vrouw Vedder cooked it for their supper; and though it was not a very big fish, they all had some.

Grandfather must have told Vrouw Vedder something about what had happened; for that night, when she put Kit to bed, she felt of his clothes carefully — but she did n't say a word about their being damp. And she said to Kat: "To-morrow we will see the shoemaker and have him make you another shoe."

Then Kit and Kat hugged her and said good-night, and popped off to sleep before you could wink your eyes.

I want you to notice first the style in which this chapter is written. So simple, so clear, so direct, so flexible, so perfectly adapted to little children that three-year-olds adore the tale, and yet — are *you* bored by it? Is there any of the first-

reader "This is a cat. The cat has four legs" English, which would wear you out if you had to read much of it? How true the picture painted by the simple words: "She looked across the road which ran by the house, across the canal on the other side, across the level green fields that lay beyond, clear to the blue rim of the world, where the sky touches the earth. The sky was very blue; and the great, round, shining face of the sun was just peering over the tops of the trees as she looked out."

Would you have thought of attempting to describe the dykes of Holland and its commerce for tiny children? And yet how perfectly is brought to their understanding the wall that has to be there to shut out the sea or "there would n't be any Holland or any Holland Twins or any story"; and the ships that "take flax and linen from the mills of Holland to make

dresses for little girls in other countries" — big things, big ideas brought to little children in the concrete way that is *the* way of giving new information to tiny folk. The author's describing the wall first — making it interesting, making it important to our little listener who thinks himself the center of the universe — and her keeping the name of the dyke until the last — there again is understanding of child mind as well as skill in handling English.

Next note the story's particularity of detail — how youngsters delight in this! The lunch was put up in the *yellow* basket — not in *a* basket, *any* basket; "the grandfather carried his rod and the lunch-basket, the Twins the basket of worms between them and their rods over their shoulders" — from beginning to end there is a most satisfying attention to such important items as these.

It is a happy home in which the Twins live. They are wakened in the morning by mother's kiss. Grandfather thinks it fun to give his holiday for the small people's pleasure. Mother does n't punish children for an accident that means a lost shoe and a soaking.

The incidents of the story are absolutely natural and childlike; and what a lot of fun there is! The hook's catching and pricking Kit, grandfather's fishing the youngster out of the water, the wet clothes hung out on the improvised clothes-line while the naked little twin plays buried up to his arms in the warm sand. What gay laughs our small listener will have over these catastrophes!

And then, this is one of the stories that "open doors." Most of its incidents and allusions sound familiar to our little listener. This is important. We proceed "from the known to the unknown" in

educating not only children but grown people. By familiar child life set in novel surroundings, with the strange scenes not too swiftly introduced and described, we have opened a door to a new interest. To the end of his days quaint little Holland, the land of dykes and canals and wooden shoes and Dutch twins, will be no dull geography lesson, no mere spot on the map, but a country of vivid personal interest to the big boy and the man who listened to mother's reading of this story in childhood.

I have not spoken of the delightful illustrations of "The Dutch Twins" because it would be piling on impossible demands to say that every author should illustrate her own books as profusely and effectively as has Mrs. Perkins. Would n't it be ideal if such a demand could be met?

You will notice, if you make the test, that this story has a positive, a good

quality for every "Don't" of the preceding chapter. Try by this test every book you read to your children. You will not long need the simple language of the "Twins," because children who listen daily to good reading grow with astonishing rapidity in vocabulary and mental grasp.

The thought of choosing books which will open doors to new interest leads us directly into the subject of the next chapter, travel and history stories for little people.

CHAPTER IX

TRAVEL AND HISTORY STORIES

ONE day when I was eleven or twelve years of age, strolling into my best friend's house I caught sight of a green-and-gold covered book bearing the fascinating title "The Prince and the Pauper." Opening to the frontispiece I beheld a silk-and-jewel clad prince approaching a tattered lad of his own age, while a big man-at-arms at rigid attention stood near.

A second later and I was three thousand miles and more than three hundred years away from my apparent surroundings, following with breathless absorption the fortunes of the boy King Edward VI of England, fortunes so strangely interwoven by the wonderful story-teller with those of his ragged subject Tom Canty.

I have no idea how many times I have read that entrancing story, but I know I shall never outgrow its effect. I smile at the memory of my girlish indignation when I opened my first English history textbook and found the reign of my boy king disposed of in three brief pages! All other history might be dull, but anything, anywhere, about Edward and his father Henry VIII, and his sisters Elizabeth and Mary, about Lady Jane Grey his cousin and Hertford Lord Protector, about London of the sixteenth century and the customs and institutions of the times, — connect a character or an occurrence with this story and immediately it took on vivid interest. When I began to study general history, I mentally dated important European events as so many years before or after the reign of Edward. This early awakened interest in the Tudor period follows me even now. Only lately, for ex-

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ample, I discovered Harrison Ainsworth's nice, old-fashioned novels, because, happening to glance into "The Tower of London," I noticed "Lady Jane Grey" on the first page. That settled my carrying the book to the charging desk, and going back shortly for "Windsor Castle," a story of Henry VIII.

When I took my first wonderful trip abroad a few years since, it was natural enough — though unpremeditated — that the English part of the trip should become a sort of "Prince and the Pauper" pilgrimage; but I also learned some new things about the influence of a child's story books on an adult's likings.

From the minute I took my first walk upon the walls of an ancient city, and when I crossed a grassy moat to step under the portcullis of a grim feudal castle, from those first hours in old England to the day before my return sailing, when, in Paris,

the name Rue Roget de Lisle on a street corner sent the shivers along my spinal column as I thought of the stirring happenings which the singing of the "Marseillaise" has always occasioned in France, — all through my happy travels I kept finding that the things I enjoyed most were those I had known about and loved when I was a child. In the tired dog dragging a milk-cart through the streets of Brussels, I beheld the original of "The Dog of Flanders." Each German castle crowning a rocky height made me picture within its walls the gentle "Dove" who came to live in just such an "Eagle's Nest" of robber barons hundreds of years ago. After a long day's ride across Germany I chuckled with glee when sweet-faced Schwester Augusta left me in a room having a tall white porcelain stove in one corner. It was a warm July day and I had no occasion whatever for needing a

fire, but was not a porcelain stove, even one of plain white tiles, at least a distant cousin to the wonderful Hirschvogel in the story of "The Nürnberg Stove"?

Comparing notes with many others I find that my experience is typical of that of most adults who spent many childish hours in story books. You will not wonder, therefore, that I believe firmly in the romantic story as a starting-point for a child's interest in history and travel. Admirable accounts of historical events, descriptions of the customs or scenery of a country pale before the story of a hero or heroine who lives in the midst of those events or scenes.

Little "Heidi" of the Swiss Alps, "Peep-in-the-World" who spent such a delightful holiday in Germany, funny "Donkey John" the little wood carver of the "Toy Valley" in the Tyrol, — if all children grew up with such stories as

these, we librarians should not encounter the narrow reading interests common to many of our boys and girls to-day. A little girl, glancing into a book called "Two Royal Foes," remarked to the children's librarian, "You'd know that book was no good because the minute you look into it you see the word 'Prussia'!" (This incident took place years before the great war. The child was merely voicing her colossal indifference to anything that bore a foreign name.) Two big boys returning from a trip around the world were asked by a Scotch friend of mine, "Well, boys, how did you like my Edinburgh?" "Edinburgh? Edinburgh?" said one of the boys, wrinkling his forehead: then turning to his brother, he asked, "Say, Jack, that's the place we bought those golf stockings, is n't it?"

The trouble with those children was that their fathers and mothers did not

early choose songs and pictures and stories that would have made foreign names rich with possibilities of interest. A young child who hears his mother sing the tender and stirring Scotch ballads, who lives in the pictures of Caldecott and Greenaway, Oscar Pletsch and Boutet de Monvel, who listens to tales of Curtius and Joan of Arc, Tell and Bruce and Hiawatha, becomes a heart-dweller in these lands of song and picture and story; and this love for the picturesque in history and travel is the first step on the road to an interest in facts and dates and philosophical history and in descriptions of others lands and peoples.

After you have kindled their interest, the children will show what next to do, because they will be so full of questions that you will have but to follow their lead. If there is a good public library in your town, the reference librarian will be

your best friend. Are the children living in the Rome of faithless Tarpeia and faithful Damon and Pythias, of Romulus and Remus and Androcles the lion's friend? Bring home volumes from the shelves of Roman history and antiquities, books whose illustrations will give the houses and the amphitheaters and the temples, warriors in full armor, triumphal progresses, vestal virgins and galley slaves, ships and market-places and sumptuous Roman feasts. You have only to remark that these books contain pictures of ancient Rome which may be seen by any child who has clean hands and who will turn the leaves carefully, and you will be kept busy for days answering questions; and some years hence the Roman history lessons of your high-school son and daughter will be a happy renewal of acquaintance with old friends, instead of a textbook grind.

Perhaps at this point I ought to say that I do not advise reading "The Prince and the Pauper" to little children, for fear that its richness of allusion might be confusing even to those used to the best reading. Firmly as I believe that we more often err in holding back than by pushing ahead bright-minded children, it is possible to go too fast; and it would be almost a tragedy to give a child a lasting dislike for a thing so beautiful as the above, by choosing the wrong time for the first reading. The mother herself, from her familiarity with her child and the book under consideration, must decide when the right time has come to introduce the new story.

CHAPTER X

NATURE BOOKS

A COMFORTABLE old horse was jogging along a country road bearing villageward a lad of nine, his mother and aunt, who had been spending a day at a friend's lakeside bungalow. It was the twilight hour and over the lonely stretch of woods through which they were passing the very spirit of peace seemed to brood.

Suddenly the boy's mother drew rein exclaiming, "Hark! There's a wood thrush singing his evening song."

From the depths of the woods came the notes, so thrillingly sweet, so poignantly sad, that one can scarcely hear them without a lump in the throat. We listened, almost breathless, till the lovely song ended, and then drove on, our boy

— a youngster still in the primitive savage stage of development — as silent as we grown-ups in the sweet hush of the hour.

Months later, in their city home, I was reading to the children our favorite country story, "Jolly Good Times," a wonderfully perfect picture of child life on a New England farm. We came to this description of the close of one of Millie's and Teddy's summer days: —

Later, when Lois and Chettie had gone home, Millie went with Teddy to drive the cows to pasture. The sun had set, but all the low-lying clouds along the western mountains were still bright with rosy light. Belated birds were flying in all directions, seeking their homes for the night. Their songs had ceased. There was only a faint, chippering, twittering sound, as they subsided into their nests.

Suddenly Teddy caught Millie's arm.

"Stop!" he said, "Hark, a minute! There 's my bird."

Way off, from the woods across the river came the sweet, melancholy notes of a wood thrush. They listened as the twilight seemed to throb and quiver with the melody. . . .

I looked up, smiling, into the eyes of our nine-year-old. How those eyes glowed back into mine as our young savage breathed a long "Ah-h-h! That's slick"! "Slick" I perfectly understood to be "boy" for the beauty and the feeling and the poetry which I knew to be buried deep in the heart of this most unromantic appearing youngster.

If I were able to dictate the "bringing-up" of a child which would insure his becoming deeply interested in the wonderland of nature, I should arrange for his having a mother like the one possessed by the above fortunate children, a woman having the scientist's enthusiasm and exact habits of observation, a deep reverence for God's wonderful works, and the under-

standing tact of a loving student of child nature.

The family may be seated at the dinner table when this mother exclaims, "Children, I verily believe I see a parula warbler!" The "parula warbler," it appears, is a very rare visitor in these parts, so unusual, indeed, as to justify the family's leaving the table, getting out the bird glasses, and taking a good look at the stranger. After the children resume their seats the mother reads from her Blanchan and Chapman descriptions of the new bird; and when dessert is finally over the little daughter, who "takes music lessons," gets the book on "Wild Birds and their Music" to see if Mr. Matthews tells her how to reproduce parula warbler's notes on the piano. This time the book disappoints her, for the new acquaintance is so insignificant a songster that his notes are not given.

Out in the garden, poking about among her beloved growing things, the mother calls, "Children, come here and see this little creature." The children leave the swing, or the tea party on the back porch, or the "shoot the shute" in the maple tree, and eagerly stoop close to notice a caterpillar that lives on the parsley and carrot leaves. The little creature is so marked with green, white, and yellow, resembling the green, lacy foliage with the sunshine and shadows falling between the narrow fringes of the leaves, that he is almost indistinguishable. This, mother tells, is an example of nature's protective coloring, and the fascinating subject is pursued in books that tell about animals who wear coats of snow color in winter and woods colors in summer and about many other wonderful provisions of Mother Nature.

Strolling along a country road bordered

by delightful wild growth the mother points out a "jewel casket that has no lock and key, but if you touch its secret spring the jewels will fly out for you." This starts the children on the search for all sorts of curious seed travelers, seeds with wings and seeds with sails, prickly seeds that cling to animals who thus carry them to new planting ground, and so on.

After a rain the children have a clear little illustration of the action of water in carving the earth's surface. Deep valleys and canyons are shown to have been formed in the same way, on a large scale, as the little valleys and canyons in the children's own yard.

And, perhaps, of all the natural sciences this mother thinks most of the study of astronomy, for, believing that facts stored in the mind are of little importance as compared with the effect of

knowledge upon the heart and soul, she thinks the study of the heavens peculiarly fitted to give the child thoughts that reach up to God.

If you ask me to suggest a book that will be certain to kindle a child's interest in the people of Switzerland, I can safely answer, "Read Johanna Spyri's 'Heidi.'" If you ask how to make nature lovers and observers of children, I must answer that no book or books can be depended upon to accomplish this. A mother or other sympathetic adult who has at least an elementary acquaintance with the natural sciences, and who is willing to study enough to keep ahead of her children, must, in ways like the above, rouse the children's interest in the animals, the plants, the stars themselves. After this, and always along with this personal introduction, books will be perfect mines of delight. Not "juvenile" books so

much as the mother's own reference library, however.

A list called "Some Nature Books for Mothers and Children" is published by the Children's Museum of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. About ninety titles are given, and one may find not one but a number of books on reptiles, on shells, on fishes, pond life, moths, wasps, spiders, ferns, mushrooms, garden vegetables, trees in winter as well as in summer, and so on. Mothers and fathers outside of Brooklyn will at any time be helped with advice if they apply to the above unique and interesting museum.

An adult beginner who wishes a compact, authoritative, fairly popular and not very expensive book on each of a half-dozen subjects most likely to appeal to children will make no mistake in adding to her library the following: —

On Birds

Chapman, F. M. *Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America.* Appleton. $3.50.

Bailey, Mrs. F. M. *Handbook of Birds of the Western United States.* Houghton. $3.50.

On Insects

Comstock, J. H. *Insect Life.* Appleton. $1.75.

On Wild Flowers

Dana, Mrs. F. T. *How to Know the Wild Flowers.* Scribner. $2.

On Trees

Keeler, H. L. *Our Native Trees and How to Identify Them.* Scribner. $2.

On Geology

Brigham, A. P. *Textbook of Geology.* Appleton. $1.40 net.

On Astronomy

Clarke, E. C. *Astronomy from a Dipper.* Houghton. $.60.

In a later chapter, among books recommended for the children's own library, I will give a few titles of "juvenile" nature books interesting enough for gen-

eral reading even if one has no leaning to the subject. Judging by what we have to choose from, it is uncommon for the person who is an authority on a branch of science to possess also an understanding of children and a gift of style. Unless it is as well done as in the case of "The Prince and His Ants," a writer only confuses children and makes his information useless by attempting to give his facts in the guise of a fairy tale. Look for books that give information in clear, straightforward language, with such occasional bits of imagination and comparison with familiar human life as will help to capture and hold the interest of little children.

Seek books whose science is accurate, yet remember always that to kindle a child's love for the Heavenly Father's creatures is far more important than to teach him to dissect and name their parts.

CHAPTER XI

BOOKS OF OCCUPATIONS AND GAMES

On one of the lovely bays that indent the coast of the "Country of the Pointed Firs" there is a sheltered nook so beautiful that I withhold its name lest fashion come to appropriate and spoil the place for a little group who annually fly from the city's work to recuperate spirit and body in the heavenly loveliness of earth and sea and sky.

Among the attractions of the spot to those fortunate enough to be invited within the circle are the charming girls and boys whose fathers and mothers have found this summer home.

Dearly as we Americans love our children, there is no denying the fact that most of us have not yet learned how not

to spoil them. If the agent of a summer resort were to advertise as a chief attraction the presence of numbers of children between the ages of six and twelve, who might be counted upon to accompany adult visitors on all sailing trips and picnics and country tramps; who would join in conversations and games and fireside concerts; — one can imagine that that vacation place would be given a wide berth, not merely by those who frankly dislike children, but by the very people who are devoting their lives to making conditions happier and better for the little ones they love.

Unhappily familiar as we all are with the *enfant terrible* whose sacred right to develop freely is interpreted by most parents as an inalienable right to trample upon the liberties of adults, it is most refreshing to find one spot where boys and girls, trained by fathers and mothers pos-

sessing a genius for parenthood, enter so happily into the life of the community that departing visitors, without stretching the truth, assure the parents that their vacation pleasures have been enhanced many fold by the presence of the charming children.

One of the causes contributing to the above delightful result is that these children have been trained to a resourcefulness truly remarkable. The youngsters can "do" more things with their bodies and brains than most people would believe possible to be done by children of their ages. They were all born, too, before America went into hysterics over the teachings of a certain foreign lady, hailed as a prophet by women who seem to have lost the art of their grandmothers in bringing up children.

A year or two ago one of the boys of ——— Cove stood watching his mother

as she deftly concocted one of his favorite dishes. Presently he exclaimed, "Mother, I'd like to learn to make muffins!"

There is one kind of mother who would have answered the lad, "Oh, you'd get flour and grease all over the kitchen. I can't have you messing round my stove. It's too much trouble to teach you. I'd rather do the work myself."

A mother of a more indulgent sort would have submitted to the "messing," complying part way with the boy's desire by allowing him to help, but by no means to learn the whole interesting process.

Still another mother would have exclaimed, "What, a boy in the kitchen baking! This is women's and girls' work, not boys', and men's. You don't want to be a girly boy!"

Arthur's mother was different. She knew that it was a trouble to teach a beginner, and that messing the kitchen was

an inevitable stage in a young cook's progress. She, however, believed in the all-round training of every human; she knew that the very best time for teaching any new thing is the time when the child himself wants to learn it; and she looked into the future, to emergencies when the boy's and man's ability to cook might be vitally useful to himself and to others dependent upon him.

So Arthur learned to make first-rate muffins. And now, on many a summer morning, the children steal softly and gleefully down the bare, sweet-smelling stairs, and while Arthur acts as *chef*, littlest sister sets the table, nine-year-old brings on the luscious blueberries, the country cream and the shredded wheat. By the time father comes to make the coffee, breakfast is ready in the beautiful bungalow living-room, flooded with morning sunshine and sweet with odors

of pine and sea; and mother is proudly escorted to her place by the family who delight to hear her exclaim at their allowing her to be so lazy as to sleep until this late hour.

Of course it is good for children, — the untrammeled life in a summer home, where sailing, rowing, motor-boating, canoeing, and swimming may be daily enjoyed; where one may collect specimens from the beach at low tide, or from woods and fields skirting the rocky shore; where to familiarity with sea life is added the charm of being at home in farm and garden; where one assists at clam-bakes and making hot bacon sandwiches, at constructing a dressing-table and building an ice-house; where one moulds dishes from one's own claybank and bakes the same in a miniature oven built just above high-water mark; where the sea provides necklaces for doll children and the roadside

burrs to make doll furniture; where — but there is positively no limit to the possibilities of educating those children to use every faculty God has given them.

The girls swim as well as the boys, and handle the boats as skillfully. The boys have never heard that for a male creature to touch a needle is evidence of weakness. The same manly boy of eleven whose coolness and courage saved a boatful of people from disaster, with a twinkle of fun contributed an excellent piece of embroidery to the "fair" annually held in the tiny church on the hill. Simple "first aid" lessons have been absorbed to such purpose that when one of the little girls cut her finger rather badly, none of the grown-ups being near, a twelve-year-old used the peroxide, the absorbent cotton and the surgical tape as cleverly as his mother would have done.

In parlor games as well as out of doors,

these children, by intimate association with adults, learn initiative, resourcefulness, and mental quickness, to be equally free from self-consciousness and from forwardness, to take defeat like good sportsmen. They are learning, in short, how to become delightful contributing members of social gatherings.

Now the time to begin training a child to enjoy himself without constant tending is in his earliest years. Too many American mothers needed Montessori to tell them that a child wants to do things for himself, that he feels baffled, defrauded, when impatient or misunderstanding adults take the shoe-tying out of his bungling fingers, and at the same time take away opportunities for the child to learn control of his muscles and control of his will.

Any mother with the best will in the world to employ the busy little minds and

fingers would run out of ideas if she could not draw upon others' experiences for help. We were never so fortunate as to-day in the number of excellent books of occupations and games available. While most of these are written for children above eight or nine years of age, there are a few well adapted for the use of mothers of the younger children.

A book which tells one how to get hours and hours of fun out of material usually treated as waste is twice valuable — it saves the dollars for parents who have not many to spend, and it shows the children that a department store and a full purse are not necessary for amusement if one is a person of ideas. Such a book is one by Bertha Johnston, called "Home Occupations for Little Children." How to make a toy fence out of a strawberry-box, how to make a potato horse, a corn-cob house, a seed necklace, a clothes-pin

doll, a cork table; about collecting and classifying pebbles, leaves, etc., about games and celebrations of festival days — these are hints of the suggestions for mothers which this little book gives; in a way, too, to make one think of the principles underlying the choice of occupations and materials. This book should be on the mother's shelf when the little one is hardly out of babyhood.

To supplement the above, as the baby grows to be five or six years old, choose Beard's "Little Folks' Handy Book." The profuse illustrations and clear diagrams help to explain how to make paper jewelry, old envelope toys, visiting card houses, Christmas tree decorations, Indian costumes of newspapers, and many other things.

One of the best on its subject for the younger children is Lucas's "Three Hundred Games and Pastimes, or, What

shall we do now." Here are games old and new, games for the fireside and for the garden, games to play in the train, on a picnic, at the seaside, even games to play alone and in bed. There are suggestions, too, about things to make and do, and this book will entertain the children for their evenings and rainy days until they grow old enough to borrow "harder" books from the public library.

Rich's "When Mother Lets Us Make Paper-Box Furniture" is particularly satisfactory. The pictures show exactly the necessary stages in the transformation of a box into a doll's piano, a bookcase, a chiffonier, a stove, as the case may be. The directions tell just what kind of boxes to use and what outfit of tools is necessary. Materials are so inexpensive and results so satisfactory that this little volume pays its way many times over.

There are two housekeeping books,

clear, simple, and attractive enough to be used even with seven-year-olds. These are Johnson's "When Mother Lets Us Help," and Ralston's "When Mother Lets Us Sew." These will make housework look interesting to any child. No wonder it becomes monotonous to "help" always and only by wiping the spoons, dusting the chair-legs, and similar over-and-over practices. Such employment is about as educative as piece-work in a factory. Let the children learn whole processes, and once more, do not be afraid of their beginning early.

If one is lucky enough to have an "outdoors," Mary Duncan's "When Mother Lets Us Garden" is as inviting as it is practical and helpful. From the happy occupation of coaxing things to grow in one's own little patch of ground it is an easy step to making friends with all of Mother Nature's children.

CHAPTER XII

BUYING THE LIBRARY

It is now time for the list of books which are to be bought for the nursery bookshelf. Used as I am to the task, it is always difficult to come down to the positiveness of a short list, because of the necessary exclusion of fine books which it hurts one to leave out. The list must be short to be practical, since the average father of these expensive children will be unable to spend many dollars a year on their library, and of course those dollars must be made to buy the richest library possible. I shall name more titles than this "average" family could afford, but few people are entirely out of reach of public libraries, which will lend what one cannot own.

Suppose one has a number of poetry

collections from which to choose. All are so well selected that it is hard to say that one is better than another in quality.

We must first see whether these collections practically duplicate one another, or whether it is necessary to buy two or more in order to cover all the varieties of poetry we wish to give the children.

We will next let the price question help us decide. Here is Number One costing $2 and very similar, except for unnecessarily costly make-up, to Number Two at $1.25. Number Three is as well selected as Number Two and is, moreover, a larger collection. But Number Three is printed on poorer paper than Number Two (and will therefore wear out faster), its type is rather forbiddingly fine, and there are no illustrations. A poetry collection does not need illustrations, but those in Number Two are quaint and interesting so that they really add to the

value of the book. Collection Number Four costs only 75 cents, but it has less than half as many poems as Number Two, at $1.25; Number Five is too bulky; Number Six is very poorly illustrated. Finally we decide to buy Number Two.

This may illustrate slightly the method by which we arrive at a decision to include one title and reject another. The result does not mean necessarily that the title included is the one good book of its kind, but rather that, all things considered, it is best for our purpose.

Where there are several good editions of a book obtainable I have named those of different prices unless I have felt that a certain one is decidedly better than the others, "all things considered." If you can afford to get all the best editions of all these books, your children are fortunate; but I should prefer to buy all the

titles, rather than get a $2.50 "Golden Staircase" and no "Posy Ring."

A beautifully made volume is an education in taste, and a very unattractive edition may prejudice a child against a classic. At the same time, the literary content of the book is the only real essential; and if you teach your children to think that anything between two covers may be a shining delight, you may bring home a shop-worn bargain, — a ten-cent "Æsop" or a twenty-five cent "Alice," — and be thankful for the chance, if it is a question of the cheap book or none at all.

I dislike to make graded lists, since one of my pet hobbies is that each individual child should be allowed to develop as fast as his own nature impels him. I know a little girl who at two years and seven months wanted Kipling's "Just So Stories" read (not told) to her every night. I know another who knew "The Jungle

Book" almost by heart at the age of four. A boy of seven delighted in Clodd's "Childhood of the World," a serious though clearly written account of prehistoric man; and another lad of the same age adored Lamb's "Adventures of Ulysses," which is practically Chapman's translation of Homer's Odyssey, unaltered except by omissions. If I were to grade the above books according to public-school standards, I should not dare list the three last below the grammar grades. Neither should I think it reasonable to say that all children should be given them at ages when they were liked by the children mentioned, even though those were perfectly normal, healthy youngsters, no one of whom could be called precocious.

I do not believe in any Procrustean method of supplying books to children when we know that even those of the

same family and the same environment develop differently.

However, the lists will be thought unsatisfactory if I do not suggest some sort of an age guide. I will therefore grade them according to my observation of the likings of children of my acquaintance, brought up by parents unafraid of flinging the fodder high for their bright youngsters to reach.

I suggest buying the books listed below in the order given; for example, Caldecott's nursery rhymes first of the picture books, "Dutchie Doings" one or two years later — making sure of getting some titles from each group of subjects.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN UNDER THREE YEARS OF AGE

Poetry

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *A Child's Garden of Verses.*

Among many good editions are those illustrated by Storer (Scribner. $1.50) and by Mars and Squire (Rand. $.50).

Picture Books; Mother Goose; Fairy Tales.

Caldecott, Randolph. *Hey Diddle Diddle.* Warne. $.25.

The House that Jack Built. Warne. $.25.

Sing a Song for Sixpence. Warne. $.25.

Potter, Beatrix. *Tale of Peter Rabbit.* Warne. $.50.

Also *Tales of Benjamin Bunny, Jemima Puddleduck, Mr. Jeremy Fisher, Squirrel Nutkin, Tom Kitten,* and others, at $.50 each.

Brooke, L. Leslie. *Johnny Crow's Garden.* Warne. $1.

Greenaway, Kate. *Mother Goose.* Warne. $.60.

Under the Window. Warne. $1.50.

Lefevre, Félicité. *The Cock, the Mouse and the Little Red Hen.* Jacobs. $1.

Smith, E. Boyd. *The Chicken World.* Putnam. $1.50.

Parkinson, Ethel. *Dutchie Doings.* Dodge. $1.

Lucas, E. V., and Bedford, F. D. *Four and Twenty Toilers.* McDevitt-Wilson. $1.75.

Brooke, L. Leslie. *The Three Bears.* Warne. $.40.

The Three Little Pigs. Warne. $.40.

Æsop. *Fables.*

The following are good editions: —

Baby's Own Æsop. Illustrated by Crane. Warne. $1.50.

Book of Fables. Chosen by Scudder. Houghton. $.50.

Fables. Illustrated by Rackham. Doubleday. $1.50.

Kipling, Rudyard. *Just So Stories.* Scribner. $1.50.

Stories that might be true

Perkins, Lucy Fitch. *The Dutch Twins.* Houghton. $.50.

The Japanese Twins. Houghton. $.50.

Hopkins, W. J. *The Sandman; His Farm Stories.* Page. $1.50.

The Sandman; More Farm Stories. Page. $1.50.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN THREE TO FIVE YEARS OLD

Poetry

Our Children's Songs. Harper. $1.25.

Wiggin, Kate Douglas, and Smith, Nora A. *The Posy Ring.* Doubleday. $1.25.

Picture Books

Smith, E. Boyd. *The Farm Book.* Houghton. $1.50.

The Seashore Book. Houghton. $1.50.

Moffat, A. E. *Our Old Nursery Rhymes.* Illustrated by Le Mair. McKay. $1.50.

Little Songs of Long Ago. Illustrated by Le Mair. McKay. $1.50.

Fairy Tales

Lorenzini, Carlo. *Adventures of Pinocchio.* Ginn. $.40.

An edition illustrated by Copeland (Ginn. $1) is good. So also is one illustrated by Folkard (Dutton. $ .50).

Kingsley, Charles. *Water Babies.* Ginn. $.35.

Also an edition illustrated by Goble (Macmillan. $2).

Grimm, J. L. K. and W. K. *Fairy Tales.* Illustrated by Rackham. Doubleday. $1.50.

Household Stories. Illustrated by Crane. Macmillan. $1.50.

Houghton publishes a 40-cent edition.

Kipling, Rudyard. *Jungle Book.* Century. $1.50.

Second Jungle Book. Century. $1.50.

Bible

Moulton, R. G. *Bible Stories: Old Testament.* Macmillan. $.50.

Kelman, J. H. *Stories from the Life of Christ.* Dutton. $.50.

Stories that might be true

Abbott, Jacob. *Franconia Stories* (part). Harper. $.60 each.

Malleville. *Caroline.*
Beechnut. *Agnes.*
Stuyvesant.

Ward, Mrs. Humphry. *Milly and Olly.* Doubleday. $1.20.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN FIVE TO SEVEN YEARS OLD

Picture Books

Boutet de Monvel, L. M. *Joan of Arc.* Century. $3.

Poetry

Chisholm, Louey. *The Golden Staircase.* Putnam. Editions at $1, $1.75, and $2.50.

Bible

The Bible for Young People. Century. $1.50.

Fairy Tales; Other Famous Stories

Harris, Joel Chandler. *Uncle Remus; His Songs and His Sayings.* Appleton. $2.

Andersen, Hans Christian. *Fairy Tales.* Illustrated by Stratton. Lippincott. $1.25.

Kingsley, Charles. *The Heroes; or, Greek Fairy Tales.* Ginn. $.30.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Wonder-Book.* Houghton. $.75.

Tanglewood Tales. Houghton. $.75.

Many editions obtainable.

Dodgson, C. L. (Lewis Carroll, *pseud.*) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass.* Illustrated by Tenniel. Macmillan. $.50.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Illustrated by Rackham. Doubleday. $1.40.

Craik, D. M. (Mulock). *Little Lame Prince.* Illustrated by Dunlap. Rand. $1.25.

Howells, W. D. *Christmas Every Day.* Harper. $1.25.

Pyle, Howard. *Pepper and Salt.* Harper. $1.50.

Wonder Clock. Harper. $2.

Cervantes-Saavedra. *Don Quixote.* Retold by Parry; illustrated by Crane. Lane. $1.50.

Pyle, Howard. *Merry Adventures of Robin Hood.* Scribner. $3.

Stories that might be true

Wyss, J. D. *The Swiss Family Robinson.* Illustrated by Rhead. Harper. $1.50.

There is a 65-cent edition published by Ginn.

Smith, M. P. (Wells). *Jolly Good Times.* Little. $1.25.

Four on a Farm. Little. $1.50.

Jackson, Helen Hunt. *Nelly's Silver Mine.* Little. $1.50.

Sherwood, M. M. (Butt). *The Fairchild Family.* Illustrated by Florence Rudland. Stokes. $1.50.

Morley, Margaret W. *Donkey John of the Toy Valley.* McClurg. $1.25.

Crichton, F. E. *Peep-in-the-World.* Longmans. $1.25.

Spyri, Johanna. *Heidi.* Ginn. $.40.

Nature Books

Wood, Theodore. *Natural History for Young People.* Dutton. $2.50.

Bertelli, Luigi. *The Prince and his Ants.* Holt. $1.35.

Kirby, Mary and Elizabeth. *The Sea and its Wonders.* Nelson. 5*s.*

Mitton, G. E. *The Children's Book of Stars.* Macmillan. $2.

Parsons, F. T. *Plants and their Children.* American Book Co. $.65.

History

Tales and Talks from History. Caldwell. $1.

O'Neill, Elizabeth. *Nursery History of England.* Stokes. $2.

Tappan, Eva M. *Story of the Greek People.* Houghton. $.65.

Grierson, Elizabeth W. *The Children's Book of the English Minsters.* Macmillan. $2.

Lang, Mrs. Andrew. *Book of Princes and Princesses.* Longmans. $1.

Travel

Mitton, G. E. *The Children's Book of London.* Macmillan. $2.

Schwatka, Frederick. *Children of the Cold.* Ed. Pub. Co. $1.25.

Finnemore, John. *Peeps at Switzerland.* Macmillan. $.55.

Occupations

Johnston, Bertha. *Home Occupations for Little Children.* Jacobs. $.50.

Beard, Lina and A. B. *Little Folks' Handy Book.* Scribner. $.75.

Duncan, Frances. *When Mother Lets Us Garden.* Moffat. $.75.

Lucas, E. V. and Elizabeth. *Three Hundred Games and Pastimes.* Macmillan. $2.

Johnson, Constance. *When Mother Lets Us Help.* Moffat. $.75.

Ralston, Virginia. *When Mother Lets Us Sew.* Moffat. $.75.

Rich, G. E. *When Mother Lets Us Make Paper-Box Furniture.* Moffat. $.75.

A SUPPLEMENTARY LIST

FOR CHILDREN OVER SEVEN AND FOR THE YOUNGER CHILDREN WHO DEVELOP RAPIDLY

Fairy Tales and Other Classics

Arabian Nights.

The following editions are good: —

Arabian Nights. Edited by Olcott. Holt. $1.50.

Arabian Nights. Illustrated by Parrish. Scribner. $2.50.

Arabian Nights' Entertainments. Edited by Lang. Longmans. $2.

Stories from the Arabian Nights. Illustrated by Dulac. Hodder. $1.50.

Stories from the Arabian Nights. Houghton. $.40.

Baldwin, James. *Story of Siegfried.* Scribner. $1.50.

Stockton, F. R. *Fanciful Tales.* Scribner. $.50.

MacDonald, George. *At the Back of the North Wind.* Illustrated by Papé and Hughes. Dodge. $1.50.

Ruskin, John. *King of the Golden River.* Heath. $.20.

Lamb, Charles. *Adventures of Ulysses.* Heath. $.25.

Pyle, Howard. *Story of King Arthur and his Knights.* Scribner. $2.50.

Story of Sir Launcelot and his Companions. Scribner. $2.50.

Story of the Champions of the Round Table. Scribner. $2.50.

Story of the Grail and the Passing of Arthur. Scribner. $2.50.

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe.*

An edition illustrated by Rhead (Harper. $1.50) and one illustrated by Smith (Houghton. $1.50) are good. Houghton publishes a 60-cent edition.

Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels.*

An edition illustrated by Rhead (Harper.

$1.50) and one illustrated by Staynes (Holt. $2.25) are good. Houghton publishes a 40-cent edition.

Lamb, Charles and Mary. *Tales from Shakespeare.*

An edition illustrated by Price (Scribner. $2.50) is beautiful. Houghton publishes a 50-cent edition.

Chaucer. *Tales of the Canterbury Pilgrims.* Retold by Darton; illustrated by Thomson. Stokes. $1.50.

Poetry

Wiggin, Kate Douglas, and Smith, Nora A. *Golden Numbers.* Doubleday. $2.

Lang, Andrew. *Blue Poetry Book.* Longmans. $1.

Repplier, Agnes. *Book of Famous Verse.* Houghton. $.75.

Some Fine Historical Stories

Clemens, S. L. (Mark Twain, *pseud.*) *The Prince and the Pauper.* Harper. $1.75.

Dix, B. M. *Merrylips.* Macmillan. $1.50.

Dodge, Mary Mapes. *Hans Brinker.* Scribner.

The edition illustrated by Doggett costs $1.50. There is an edition without illustrations at 50 cents.

Pyle, Howard. *Otto of the Silver Hand.* Scribner. $2.

Stein, Evaleen. *Gabriel and the Hour Book.* Page. $1.

Yonge, Charlotte M. *The Little Duke.* Illustrated by Millar. Macmillan. $1.25.

Miscellaneous

Clodd, Edward. *The Childhood of the World.* Macmillan. $1.25.

Hill, C. T. *Fighting a Fire.* Century. $1.50.

Ingersoll, Ernest. *Book of the Ocean.* Century. $1.50.

Jewett, Sophie. *God's Troubadour* (St. Francis of Assisi). Crowell. $1.25.

Lummis, C. F. *Some Strange Corners of our Country.* Century. $1.50.

Price, O. W. *The Land We Live In.* Small. $1.50.

Richman, Julia, and Wallach, I. R. *Good Citizenship.* American Book Co. $.45.

Syrett, Netta. *The Old Miracle Plays of England.* Young Churchman. $.80.

Some Interesting Foreign Picture Books

French

Boutet de Monvel. *Nos enfants.* Hachette.

German

Heubach. *Neue Tierbilder.* Carl.

Lefler and Urban. *Kling Klang Gloria.* Tempsky.

Liebermann. *Kindersang-heimatklang.* Scholz.

Olfers. *Windchen.* Schreiber.
Osswald. *Tierbilder.* Scholz.
Pletsch. *Hausmütterchen.* Hegel.
Was willst du werden? Hegel.

Swedish

Adelborg. *Bilderbok.* Bonnier.
Beskow. *Puttes äfventyr i blabärsskogen.* Walhström.
Olles skidfard. Wahlström.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN THE LITTLE CHILDREN GROW BIG

To suggest a course of reading for the child's first seven or eight years has been the purpose of these chapters. I cannot close without a word about the older children's books. For a fuller treatment of this latter subject I refer parents to Miss Frances Jenkins Olcott's admirable book, "The Children's Reading." The appendices of Miss Olcott's book also — "How to procure Books through the Public Library" and "How to procure Books by Purchase" — will be invaluable to parents far removed from good book-stores.

While the child from nine to twelve years of age is devouring books himself, it will be comparatively easy to guide him along lines already followed. After

a while, however, the curiosity and the self-assertiveness of the adolescent will probably lead him into "sprees" of reading stuff that will be your despair. This is not the time to be too dictatorial about what the boy or girl shall or shall not read. Influence rather than authority is the best method to use with these young persons, who know more than they will ever know again in their lives and who will kick over the traces if we hold the reins too tightly. Above everything keep the confidence of these big children. Continue the evening reading-aloud custom. Some clever mothers have told me that reading aloud the very trash brought home by the children, reading with good-natured fun at the extravagances of the stories, has resulted in their children's presently bursting into roars of sheepish laughter and thereafter adopting into the family-joke vocabulary certain choice

expressions from the absurd tales. Poking fun is much more effective than solemn commands to refrain from things considered wicked — forbidden fruit is so much more enticing than an open basket.

I am not half so fearful, for children of good homes, of the blood-and-thunder adventure story as of the quantities of "safe" juvenile books published to-day. For one thing you know that your child, brought up as he has been, will never actually turn pirate or highway robber for reading some of these gory books, which perhaps serve as escape valves for the boy's innate savagery which the conventions of our civilization merely cover but do not eradicate. The boy who has had "no bringing up" *does* imitate, the police courts tell us, the deeds of violence of which he reads in the nickel novel; but your child's snare is more likely to be the lazy-minded series habit.

It is curious that so many people think that if one removes all "swear words," all slang, all bowie knives and pistols from a story, the result will be a "perfectly harmless" book. What about the harm to the character if a child forms the habit of taking the laziest way in his reading? The adult who calls the mediocre reading habit harmless has naturally been influenced by the educational methods of our time, methods which put most of the work on the teacher and insure the child's being shielded from a thing so old-fashioned as boning down to study — actually to *study* anything that does not "interest" him, no matter how vitally important to his life will be the mastery of certain uninteresting facts, and above all the mastery of his own will, of his powers of concentration.

However, I have really not the slightest fear that children who have grown up

with the best will ever acquire any lasting taste for poor books. Their attacks of reading the latter will leave no deeper marks upon their minds than mild cases of chicken-pox or measles leave upon vigorous young bodies.

I shall have an uneasy conscience if I do not attempt to show that the programme I have suggested may lighten rather than increase the mother's cares.

When the subject of the small families of people best fitted to bring up children is under discussion, we occasionally hear advanced as an explanation the high cost of living of our time as compared with the days of our grandmothers.

Once in a while a valiant soul declares that to bring into the world ten or a dozen children to be reared in a city flat ought to be sufficient cause for arraigning the parents before the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

I have not heard given as a cause for race suicide the terrifying diffusion of knowledge of our day.

It is bad enough to go through the anxiety of having four children operated on for "adenoids and tonsils." We should have to build more sanatoria for worn-out mothers if there were many "old-fashioned" families of children to put through this modern ordeal.

To keep enough bottles of boiled water on the ice for three thirsty youngsters is no light task. Imagine trying to keep up with the thirst of thirteen!

If a man on a school-teacher's salary pays a regular monthly dentist bill of fifteen dollars for three children, it might sometimes be difficult to decide how to apportion that part of his salary left over after "straightening" four times as many mouths.

I can go through the list of my mar-

ried friends, all of whom adore children and would like to have large families, and there is not one of these intelligent parents but is paying out to doctors large sums yearly in order that these well-born children may grow up physically perfect.

And now I am adding another "ought" to the daily programme of the devoted mother.

Let us see if the immediate returns will not even up for the time and trouble spent on the reading.

To begin with, every mother knows that it is not the housework so much as the managing a bunch of lively young humans that depletes her strength and wears out her nerves. Just let a vigorous father undertake to relieve the mother, for one holiday, of the care of the kiddies. Is n't he a perfect wreck by the children's bedtime? And next day at the office he confides to his co-workers — somewhat

boastfully, because, so long as he does n't have the care of them, he likes to think his youngsters are particularly active — "By Jove! I was more used up after that day with the kids than I'd be in a month at the office!" And his friends who are fathers echo feelingly, "You're dead right on that, old man!"

If one can find a scheme that will help tide over crossness, that will get the children into the habit of hurrying instead of dawdling about dressing and undressing, that will set them eagerly to tidying up the playroom, wiping the silver and brushing off the crumbs, — of being really helpful to mother without constant prodding, — will not such a scheme pay its own way? I know, because I've tried it, that there is no easier way of getting magical results in good behavior than the promise of a story when work is done. You may call it bribery, but did you never

know a grown person, of good principles, too, to work a little harder and faster if he saw a prospect of a better salary for increased output?

There is another way in which this reading programme will pay. One of the deprivations keenly felt even by the most unselfish mother is that of having no time to cultivate her own mind. Her personal reading for years is almost zero. Now the reading for the children which I have suggested is so splendid as to be a means of culture to the adult reader as well as to the child listener.

So in oiling the wheels of discipline, in saving time for the reading by securing the children's ready help, in the satisfaction of broadening one's own mental horizon, in keeping close to the intellectual and spiritual life of the growing children so that they will not drift into thinking of mother as merely a loving caretaker of

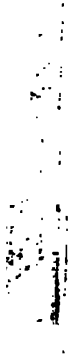
the physical needs, because I am certain of all the above and many more good results, I feel justified, not only for the children's but for the mother's sake, in urging the carrying-out of the course proposed in this book.

My last word is for fathers — a most unfairly ignored class of beings in these days!

Much of the foregoing reading must be done by the mother because she is with the children so many more hours than the father; but there is no reason why bedtime and Sunday story-hours may not be the father's share of this pleasurable duty. A man may be too clumsy to help about baths and buttons, but if he reads a daily paper he cannot deny the ability to read young people's story-books. A father ought to be unwilling to leave all spiritual intimacy with his children to the mother. By sharing their pleasure in their

books he will be learning wonderfully how to be a father to the minds and hearts of his boys and girls as well as a generous provider for their material needs.

THE END



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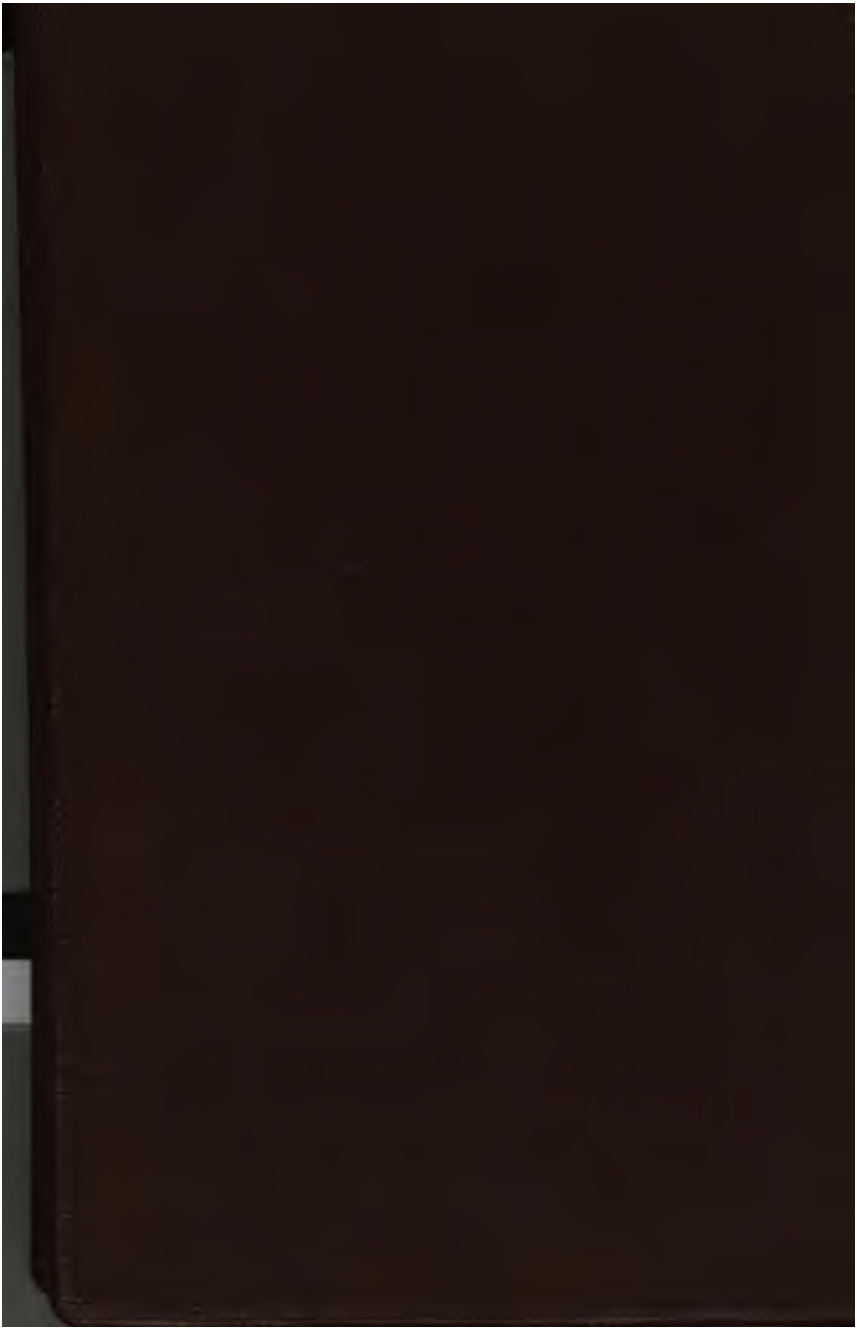
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